



# *The Lily Pad*

## *The Topeka Area Water Garden Society*

**Published Monthly – February to November**

*The objective of the society is to encourage a greater appreciation and interest in water gardening and aquatic plants, to disseminate information about those interests and to help our members stimulate the study and culture of water gardens.*

**Volume 16, Issue 4**

**May 1, 2013**



**Melody Weller talks about orioles and humming birds at the April TAWGS meeting.**

## **Feeding birds is fun**

Calling orioles "little pigs," Melody Weller, Wild Bird House, said that there will be a lot of them at first in the spring and then they will spread out over a larger feeding area later. Orioles love nectar, jelly, worms and oranges. Melody said they go through 14 - 18 jars of grape jelly a year in their backyard. She said orioles are a fun bird and have a beautiful song, so are worth trying to get them to your back yard.

You can make their nectar, just like the hummingbird nectar, only oriole nectar is usually three parts water to one part sugar, instead of 4/1 for hummingbirds. Bring to a boil and let cool before putting the nectar in the feeders.

"Don't use dyes if you make your own nectar," Melody said. "Now is the time to put it (the food) out, before they circle through the yard. That way they will come back."

"Hummers show up the end of April or the first of May," Melody said. "They are so much fun!" She warned against putting the oriole feeders and the hummingbird feeders close together. Hummers are territorial so it is even best to put their feeders on opposite sides of the house if you have a hummer that is a bully.

One of the most important part of feeding nectar is that you have to keep it fresh. Sometimes it needs to be changed twice a week. Put feeders in shady areas

## **Monthly Meeting**

**7:00 p.m. May 15, 2013**

**Note Change!!! Road Trip to Blue Acres for a tour of the greenhouse and store. Bring a lawn chair. 7331 SW 61st ST. Call 783-2298 or 633-6714 for directions.**

because it will ferment in the heat. Hummers won't come back if the nectar has fermented. You can try to keep the hummingbirds through the summer and into October. Hummers need to double their weight so they feed a lot. they are amazing little birds, Melody said. Rufus hummingbirds are usually found in western Kansas or in Colorado; Ruby throats are more commonly found here.

We even had a Rufus hummer that stayed through the winter, Melody said. Todd, her husband, designed a heater to keep the nectar from freezing.

"Red colors do attract hummers," Melody said, but it is not necessary. She said you can also put a red Christmas bow on the feeder or blue works good too. She said some hummers will come back to the same feeders year after year. They do not need perches on their feeders.

Moving on to birds in general, the nesting season is already under way. Clean your boxes and put them out early. Birds don't live in their houses, they just lay their eggs and raise their babies in the bird houses. Many birds like to build their nests in a hanging basket. Barn swallows eat a lot of mosquitoes. They are messy but they grow fast. Enjoy those babies and then hose the area off after they are gone.

Bats are great mosquito eaters too. Bats like a warm box (so put them facing the sun), an open area and at least 15 feet high. Brown bats are very common here.

Questions about birds flying into windows were answered by Melody, "They see their reflection and it is a territorial thing, typically a nesting thing. Try to put something in the window to keep them from seeing their reflection."

Melody had an array of bird feeders on display for hummers, orioles and all kinds of birds. She said the window feeders are neat because you can see the birds up close. Also, there are ant guards to keep ants out of the nectar, saucers that are easy to fill and clean, feeders for jelly and oranges, etc. You can check their website: [wild-bird-house.com](http://wild-bird-house.com) for more information on merchandise from the Wild Bird House.

## TAWGS minutes April 17, 2013

President Don Taliaferro started the meeting by asking the present members to introduce themselves.

**Guest speaker:** Melody Weller, owner of the Wild Bird House shared her expertise on hummingbirds, orioles and other birds often found in this region.

**Minutes:** Sandy Reiger moved and Phil Thompson seconded that the March minutes be approved as printed in the March Lily Pad. The motion carried.

**Treasurer's report:** Jim Mowder reported that we began the month with \$2229 in our account. After paying reimbursement expenses from the Flower Lawn and Garden Show the ending balance is \$2069. He also reported that he has not heard from the IRS regarding reinstatement of the group's non-profit status. Jim Green made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report; it was seconded by Tom Routh. The motioned was approved.

### New Business

**Pond Tour:** Phil Thompson updated the Pond Tour task list. He also distributed vouchers to the membership to sell. The vouchers are \$5 each and can be redeemed for a ticket. Tickets are \$7. Additional assignments were made at the meeting.

**Tulip Time:** Bob Saathoff said that they need docents for Tulip time, a signup sheet was made available.

**Earlene Jirik** announced that her and Dell are removing their pond and they want to donate the plants. Earlene was given several suggestions of who to donate the plants to by the membership.

**Adjournment:** Floyd Gruver moved and Jim Green seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried.

## Water plants

by Duane VanDolah

### Giant Reed

*Arundo Donex*



This plant comes from southern Europe, to Iran, India, China, and Japan. Growing to 10 to 12 feet tall and a spread of 5 feet, it makes a bold statement in and around your pond. The thick-jointed and slender stems are about 1 ½ inches thick with coarse, dull green, 3 inch leaves that are long and thin. Resembling a stand of corn, when in bloom the 2-3 feet long heads start a reddish color changing to white. Growing in zones 6-10 in sun or part-shade, this plant can grow in water depths to 6 inches deep. This plant is invasive in southern climates, but at it's most northern zones some mulching over the crown after the foliage is cut down may be needed for it to winter over.

Propagation is by dividing the rhizomes in spring through summer. Another method of propagation is by cutting at maturity in late summer, strip it of its foliage and lay it in a container of shallow water. Sprouts will start

forming at the leaf nodes. These can be cut off and potted. Quite a few uses can be found for this plant--some of them are, bio-fuel, walking sticks, trellises, fencing, musical instruments, and rayon. Medically it has been used for dropsy and cancer. A variegated form is '*Variegata*', Giant Variegated Mediterranean Rush, which is more tender and grows 3-8 feet tall. It has white and green horizontal striped leaves and can grow in up to 3 inches of water. Another smaller form is *Arundo*, 'Gold Chain', which is 7 feet tall, with variegation of white, green, and gold.

## 2013 Refreshments

May	Linda Reynolds
June	Saathoff's & Taliaferro's
July	Floyd & Diane Gruver
August	Jim and Sue Mowder
September	Tina Wesch
October	Amy and Phil Thompson
November	Potluck



## What is that ugly green stuff?

### The Pond Guy 4-13-13

. Yep: It's algae time!  
As the spring sunshine melts away ice and snow, the sun's warmth and light

reach underwater to give algae growth a little nudge along. When combined with all the extra leaves (also known as algae food!) that have blown in on windy days and a filtration system that isn't up to snuff with bacteria, they create a perfect environment for algae accumulation. So how do you get rid of it when water temps are too cold for bacteria and traditional algaecides?

### Step 1: Spring Cleaning

If you haven't already, consider doing a spring cleanout and starting fresh. Check out this blog post for step-by-step instructions for preparing for and giving your pond a thorough spring cleaning. If you've already gotten dirty this season, however, and have found that the algae is unwilling to give up its happy home, move on to step 2.

### Step 2: Oxy-Lift™ Defense® to the Rescue

For controlling stubborn algae, pull out your Oxy-Lift™ Defense® pond cleaner. The product's ingredients have no temperature restrictions, so you don't have to wait for warmer weather to treat the green nuisance. Simply turn off your stream and, while the algae-covered rocks are still wet, sprinkle on the Oxy-Lift™ powder. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Before long, you'll see the algae bubble and break free from the rock. Then turn the stream back on, and use a hand net to scoop out the debris or allow your filter to catch it.

Of course, don't forget to stick to the basics—particularly as pond season kicks off! Keep your filter running and add the natural bacteria once temperatures are suitable to keep algae growth under control.



# Moving fish back into pond

*The Pond Guy 4-6-13*

This time of year, most of us are suffering with some cabin fever—including your pond fish. After being cooped up all winter long in a temporary indoor aquarium or tub, they're ready to swim back to their spacious outdoor home.

But before you relocate your fish, you have some work to do first. The best time to return them to the pond is several weeks after you've done all the necessary chores to prepare for their homecoming. To make things easy, check out our four-step checklist:

1. **Spring Cleaning:** First, clean out your dormant pond. Remove any debris that has settled over the past few months, and perform a thorough spring cleanout to remove winter buildup. This will give your finned friends a nice place to come home to—and minimize algae growth in the spring.
2. **Jump Start Filtration:** About a month before you plan to return your fish to the pond, start your filtration system and let it run without fish. Turn on your mechanical filter and seed your filter pads with beneficial bacteria, such as Microbe-Lift® PL Gel, to speed the colony's growth (but first make sure the water temperature is above 55° Fahrenheit with your pond thermometer). Keep in mind that in the spring, a filter can take four to six weeks to become established, so adding fish without adequate filtration established can result in quick algae formation.
3. **Test Your Water:** While your pond is cycling, periodically check your water chemistry with a PondCare® Master Test Kit to ensure the pond water is balanced and pH, ammonia and nitrate levels are safe for fish.
4. **Acclimate Fish:** The final step before re-homing your fish is to help them get used to the pond's water temperature, which will likely be colder than their winter housing. Carry your fish out in a bucket and slowly add water from the pond to the bucket at 10- to 15-minute intervals, using your pond thermometer to check the water temperature as you go. This shock-prevention technique will allow them to adjust slowly—and safely—to their outdoor digs.

Your fish may become stressed during the indoor-to-outdoor transition, but you can keep it to a minimum by preparing their home and making sure they're as healthy as possible in advance of their relocation. Have fun moving!

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# Grow your own birdseed

*3-28-13 Birds & Blooms*

*By Stacy Tornio, Managing Editor*

Plants have a lot more to offer than just beautiful flowers. Why not get the most out of your garden by growing plants with multiple benefits? Here, you'll find 10 great blooms that offer seeds for birds.



**Autumn Joy sedum** (*Sedum 'Autumn Joy'*, Zones 3 to 9)

Just when your other plants start to fade, Autumn Joy sedum will take the spotlight with its star-shaped blooms. Grow in full sun to light shade until the first frost.

**Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia*, Zones 3 to 9)

This is another garden classic birds adore. The traditional black-eyed Susan has dark centers and bright-yellow flowers, but now there are even more varieties to choose from. Grow in full sun to light shade for blooms in summer through autumn.

**Blazing star** (*Liatris* species, Zones 3 to 9)

Many gardeners know this plant as gayfeather. Don't be surprised when you see an American goldfinch gripping the purple spikes of this flower head. It grows up to 5 feet in full to partial sun and blooms in summer.

**Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis*, hardiness varies by variety)

It's not hard to find an annual or perennial coreopsis (also called tickseed) that will flourish in your yard. Plant in full sun and resist the urge to overwater, as it's a drought-tolerant superstar that blooms in late spring through late summer.

**Cosmos** (*Cosmos bipinnatus*, annual)

With its gorgeous daisy-shaped blooms, this low-maintenance beauty seems too good to be true. Grow single or double blooms in full sun, and you'll have flowers (and seeds to offer feathered friends) from summer through late fall.

**Goldenrod** (*Solidago* species, Zones 3 to 9)

All it takes is a few goldenrod plants to light up your garden in late summer and fall. Plant in full sun for best results. Deadhead the flowers to promote continued blooming, which in turn offers an ongoing food source for birds.

**Mexican sunflower** (*Tithonia rotundifolia*, annual)

The vibrant, orange flower heads of Mexican sunflower will make a bold statement in any garden. Often mistaken for a zinnia, this sun- and heat-loving plant definitely holds its own when it comes to attracting birds.

**Purple coneflower** (*Echinacea purpurea*, Zones 3 to 9)

Birds will feast on the cones of this backyard favorite. New varieties offer a wide range of colors, including purple, pink, white, yellow and orange. Plant in full sun for great results midsummer to early fall.

**Continued on page 4**



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

May 15	Monthly Meeting
June 19	Monthly Meeting
June 29-30	Annual Pond Tour
July 17	Monthly Meeting
August 21	Monthly Meeting
September 18	Monthly Meeting
October 16	Monthly Meeting
November 13th	Monthly Meeting

**Birdseed Cont. Purple majesty millet** (*Pennisetum glaucum* 'Purple Majesty', annual)

It's relatively new to the plant world, but birds have caught on fast! The plant itself is 4 to 5 feet tall, while the flower stalk offers another foot of delectable goodies for birds. Grow in sun or shade to get amazing foliage from spring to fall

**Sunflower** (*Helianthus annuus*, annual)

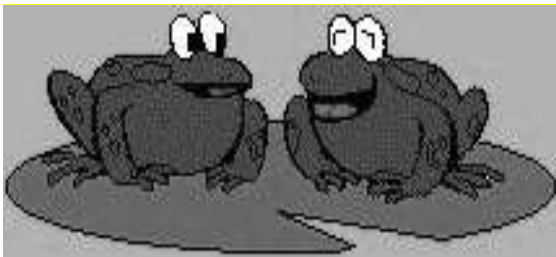
You can't expect to grow your own seed without this classic bird magnet. There are plenty of varieties to choose from, including cultivars that range from 2 to 15 feet tall and colors from yellow to red. Grow in full sun for summer and fall.

**Your Dues are Due if your label reads  
 3-13, 4-13 or 5-13**  
 Please renew as soon as possible to continue  
 receiving the newsletter.  
 Send dues to  
**Jim Mowder, 3717 SE 31st ST, 66605**

**THE TOPEKA AREA  
 WATER GARDEN SOCIETY**  
 2013 OFFICERS:

Don Taliaferro Topeka	President 785-272-8348
Open	Vice President
Amy Thompson Topeka	Secretary 785-273-7005
Jim Mowder Topeka	Treasurer 785-267-0672

Meetings are usually held the third Wednesday of each month at Old Prairie Town (Ward Meade Park) unless otherwise publicized. Dues are \$15 per single or \$20 per family and can be sent to Jim Mowder, 3713 SE 31st ST, 66605



**Check it out - [www.tawgs.org](http://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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