



# 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 18, Issue 7

August 1, 2015



### High pH levels

*The Pond Guy 7-18-15*

Your pond's pH – or potential hydrogen level is an important measurement to understand because it affects the health of those things swimming around in the water. If your pH level

is too high or too low, it could affect your fishes' ability to reproduce, fight disease and metabolize food. It can also impact the well-being of other living things in your pond, like plants, amphibians and other aquatic critters.

A pH test, like the one found in the Pondcare® Master Test Kit, can reveal a lot about your pond. But what does a high or low pH reading mean, and how can you adjust its level – or should you just leave it alone? Read on to learn more about understanding your pH level and how to change it.

#### Potential Hydrogen Defined

In super simple terms, pH is a measure of how acidic or alkaline a water body is on a scale from 0 to 14. Pure water is neutral. It has a pH close to 7.0 at 77 degrees F. Blood is also close to neutral. Ammonia's pH is ~11, which is high on the alkaline charts, while stomach acid's pH is ~1, which is acidic enough to burn through your chewed-up chow.

#### Adjusting to a Proper pH

You don't have to keep your pond at a perfect 7.0 pH all the time. In fact, an acceptable pH reading for a pond is 6.5 – 8.5, so if your score falls in this range you need not make any changes at all. If it's outside those levels, however, you will need to make some adjustments. Here are some ways to reduce your pH:

1. **Partial Water Change:** Replacing some of your pond water with fresh water is one way to reduce your pH. Remember to treat with water with a conditioner, like Pond Logic® Stress Reducer PLUS, to remove impurities and heavy metals that could be harmful to your fish.
2. **Use pH Reducer:** If you need to adjust your pH using a pH stabilizer like pH Lift or pH Drop, apply

### Monthly Meeting

7:00 p.m.

August 19, 2015

Historic Old Prairie Town, 124 NW Fillmore

Speaker - Jamie Hancock

Shawnee County Extension Agent

enough treatment to shift the levels 0.5 at a time, wait several hours before re-treating, and test the waters often with your Pondcare® Master Test Kit.

3. **Test Your Water:** Try testing your tap water, especially if you're on a well. If the pH is high from your well, then your pond will stay at about that level and you won't be able to do much to treat it.
4. **Try Clarity Defense®:** A water clarifier like Clarity Defense® can help to add trace minerals while buffering pH to promote stable levels and prevent swings. Plus, it clears cloudy water by locking up excess nutrients and allowing your filter to remove them.

Try these tricks to reduce the pH levels in your pond – but remember to do so very gradually. Good luck!

### TAWGS membership benefits

*By Diane Gruver*

Chris Newell asked me to write a little about why we joined the Topeka Area Water Garden Society and what the benefits are.

I would have to say that everything we know about water gardening was learned through TAWGS. We built our first pond knowing nothing about what we were doing except what we picked up from Puddles & Pads. Eventually we encouraged Eric Wood from P&P to start a club for ponders, but he said that it needed to be started by a person who had a pond. I was elated when I saw a notice on the P&P bulletin board announcing that David Puff was asking interested watergarden owners to meet at Ward Meade Park in July of 1998. There was a good turnout and we started out with baby steps. We wrote

bylaws and organized speakers to help us with water gardens and landscape around them. We were fortunate to have Eric and Trina Wood, Deb Spencer (Waters Edge in Lawrence) and Kip Walker available to speak to us about various aspects of fish, ponds and plants.

I believe there is no better way to learn something than hands on. We have learned how to repot lilies and other pond plants, how to clean our ponds, how to find a leak, how to build or expand our ponds, how to close them in the winter and open them in the spring, recognize a sick fish and many other aspects of water gardening. We have built ponds at Midland Hospice, Veterans Administration, Wild Life and Parks, City Tennis Park and ponds and bed streams at WMP including Anna's pond and rebuilding and refurbishing their fountain. We have re-potted lilies and lotus at WMP and Lake Shawnee. We have also cleaned several ponds that we have built over the years.

In addition to sharing ideas and pond information, we have occasionally traded pond plants in a plant exchange.

And last but not least, we have made friends in the Topeka Area Water Garden Society that we love to fellowship with every month. Fun relationships that will last long after our ponds are gone.

## TAWGS July 2015 Minutes

Meeting was called to order by president Tom Platis. It was great to have four new members with us, the Ditmer's and the Tracy's.

Don Taliaferro made a motion to accept the treasurer's report and it was seconded by Chris Newell. The 2015 pond tour was discussed. Another successful tour was made possible by everyone involved, hosts, sponsors, advertisers, pond sitters and all TAWG members who gave their time and talents to many different facets that are needed to make it all come together. A big thank you goes out to Chris Newell obtaining new sponsors and advertisers and developing and producing the posters, flyers and programs and many other things.

As far as feedback from the pond tour would be to improve the map showing the different sites. However, the use of the blue flags is beneficial in finding the ponds. Some suggestions made were to sell TAWG memberships at different sites (possibly at a discounted price), and to have the bonus ponds be ponds that have previously been on the tours.

A post pond party will be held at the Shipman's beautiful backyard on Saturday, July 25 for TAWGS members and pond hosts. A motion was made by Helen Platis for TAWGS to pay for the meat and Don Taliaferro seconded the motion. Guests are requested to bring a favorite dish to share.

It was decided to hold next year's pond tours on June 25 and 26, 2016. Diane Gruver made a motion to accept this proposal and it was seconded by Cheryl Saathoff. Don Taliaferro, Chris Newell, Tom Platis, Sue Mowder and Sherry Reed volunteered to be on the pond tour planning committee for 2016.

Chris Newell reminded the group that he had negotiated with Waterscapes to expand our storage area at their facility for an ad in the pond tour brochure. A three

year lease will be obtained before any improvements are made. Chris will provide a list of materials to TAWGS next month.

Don Taliaferro reported that a planning meeting with the Master Gardener's and Parks and Recreation will be held on July 23, 2015 to discuss possibilities of working with them on a water feature near the Shawnee County Extension office.

Floyd Gruver made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Don Reiger. Sherry Reed, Secretary

## How many fish can the pond hold

*Reprinted from 8-05 Splash*

Have your fish multiplied this summer or you found some more that you simply could not resist buying? Or both?

We recently had some severe storms here in St. Louis that left several hundred of our customers without power on hot and humid days. This produced a scramble in our retail facility for ways to keep the fish alive without pumps to oxygenate the water.

This is a rather common problem! In the summer time the oxygen content of the water falls as the water temperature rises. Most of the time this is not dangerous as the pump(s) replenish the oxygen, but when they fail....

The general rule of thumb is that a pond can safely support one inch of fish per square foot of surface area without pumps and filters running. If your pond has more fish than that, then it is best to make some provisions for potential problems such as a power outage.

Since most of us do not have a generator handy when these type of things happen, the next best thing is to keep a jar of Microbe Lift OX on the shelf. This is not a miracle cure but lots of times it is the difference between inconvenience and disaster!



## Too much sun

*The Pond Guy 7-4-15*

Sunshine has its benefits – but it also has its dangers. Direct sunlight with no shade can raise the water temperature in your pond and reduce the levels of oxygen available

to your fish. All those rays can also fuel algae blooms, as well as give your fish a sunburn (yes, really!).

Don't worry: You don't need to relocate your water feature to a less sunny locale. There are some easy ways to add shade to your pond, and here's what we recommend.

- **Terrestrial Shade:** Trees and terrestrial and marginal plants growing alongside your pond can provide plenty of shade from the outside. Blue Flag Iris and Dwarf Cattail, for instance, planted on the south or west side will cast cool, shady shadows for your fish.
- **Get Creative with Canopies:** If planting trees or plants isn't an option, consider installing a tent or canopy over part of your pond. In addition to

creating protection from the sunshine, a canopy can also add some dramatic flair to your backyard décor.

- **Aquatic Plants:** Aquatic plants, like water lilies and water hyacinth, create scads of underwater shade for your finned pals. Simply plant lilies in baskets or plant bags and place them in strategic spots around your pond or toss in water hyacinth to create a floating hideout.
- **Fish Shelters:** For a super easy solution, drop some fish shelters, like Nycon Koi Kastle Fish Shelter, in your water garden. Another option is to create fish caves with carefully positioned rocks. They'll create a shady shelter that'll protect the fish from sun – and predators.

A word of advice: Don't over shade your pond. You still want to maintain an area with some sunlight, which helps bring out koi colors, keep the water a comfortable temperature and help your plants grow.

If you think your fish are already showing signs of heat stress, check your water temperature with a pond thermometer, like Pond Logic® Floating Pond Thermometer, and do a partial water change if the water temperatures reach the high 70s or above. You might also want to add some pond salt, which will help gill function and reduce fish stress, as well as some Stress Reducer PLUS, which alleviates stress, restores a healthy slime coat and removes dangerous toxins from the water.

## Summer maintenance

*by Mike Kant, Kansas Pond Society Newsletter, Wichita*

Summer is the time when life in our ponds becomes more active and we actually spend more time around the pond. As a result, I get a lot of questions about a wide variety of issues. I know this is jumping around a lot, but let's try.

**Green Water:** This is due to excess nutrients in the pond. The single-cell algae is feeding on this and "blooming". It can be caused by over-feeding fish or under-filtering. A rainfall or hail storm loaded with nitrogen can cause this. Algae blooms almost always occur after the pond is cleaned and refilled. **Green water is not harmful to fish**, but generally doesn't look pretty. In time, usually a few weeks, nature will find a balance in your pond and the water should clear up. It took a season for mine to develop that velvety coating of algae on the sides and that is what out-competed the single-cell algae and cleared the pond water.

**Snapping Turtles:** If your pond is near a natural body of water, you may be visited by snapping turtles. While I normally say to just let nature be, these are not creatures you want in your pond. Yes, they will eat your fish, frogs and even small ducklings. But worst of all, they will try to eat you. Larger specimens have been known to snip off a toe or chomp your leg. You need to get them out. Most folks need to drain the pond to catch these guys. If you do, be very careful. They can reach that head around farther than you think. One member says they come to a shallow area in her pond in the evening. With help, she shines a light in their

eyes while someone nets them from behind. Whatever you do, don't return them to the nearby waterway. They will just return with reinforcements. Instead, haul them to a body of water several miles away, hopefully with permission of the landowner.

**Water Lily Maintenance:** Water lilies are generally low-maintenance, but there are a few things that you should do to keep them looking their best, blooming their best and staying healthy. This time of year, old leaves and blooms will turn yellow or brown and should be removed. Just lightly tug, twist, or snip the old stems off. I always like to do this when I need to get in the pond and cool off. It doesn't hurt the plant to leave them, but the pond looks better and it will stay cleaner without all the dead leaves on the bottom. If your plants are not blooming well, fertilize them with aquatic plant food tabs. Once a month should do it. I use Jobe's fruit tree stakes (the pink ones). Push the tabs or stakes down into the mud in the pot and do not leave any fertilizer exposed to the water, lest it cause an algae bloom (see first paragraph).

**Koi Spawning:** If you look at your pond some warm summer morning and the water is foamy, stinky and maybe some plants have been knocked over, you may have had a spawning. This is generally one big fish orgy. Aggressive males will push egg-bound females to try to get them to release their eggs. If they are successful they fertilize the eggs while other fish will gobble up the fresh eggs. Nature provides so many eggs that always some survive to grow into new fish. This is dependent on how many plants and crevices in rock are available for them to hide. Once they turn into new baby fish (called fry), the larger fish will not eat them. Now if you have native fish such as perch, bass or sunfish, they will eat the fry. Female koi can be hurt badly during this process. Some eventually die. But if they don't get rid of the eggs, egg impaction can occur and this can be fatal, too. If you want to encourage spawning, provide lots of submersible plants for cover. If you do not want to encourage this, keep the water cooler (below 75) and remove places where fry can hide.

Hopefully, you can enjoy your pond even more this summer by knowing more about it.

## Fun Pond Facts

**Did you know ....**

Above 60 degrees, Koi love watermelon, kiwi, blueberries, napa cabbage, strawberries, cooked rice & oatmeal, romaine lettuce, cantaloupe, honeydew, oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes, English peas, Boston lettuce, spinach, duckweed, azolla & red leaf lettuce. 7-15 Kansas Pond Society Newsletter

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Are you watching those beautiful and colorful dragonflies around your pond? Dragonflies are not really flies, in fact, they EAT flies! They lay their eggs in the water where the nymphs mature (it can take up to 3 years) Once they crawl out of the water and turn into the Dragonflies we see they live only a few more months. *Reprinted from 8-05 Splash*

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

August 13-16 International Water Lily & Water Gardening Symposium - Lawrence  
August 19 Monthly Meeting  
September 16 Monthly Meeting  
October 4 Apple Fest  
October 21 Monthly Meeting  
November 18 Pot Luck  
June 25-26, 2016 Topeka Pond Tour

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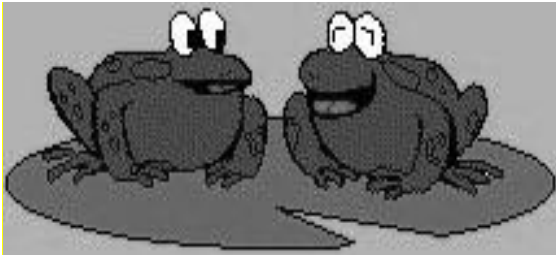
**International Water Lily and Water Gardening Society 2015 Symposium August 13 – 16, 2015 Lawrence, Kansas**  
Information and registration forms can be found at [www.IWGS.org](http://www.IWGS.org).

**Your Dues are Due if your label reads 6-15, 7-15 or 8-15**  
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**  
2015 OFFICERS:

Tom Platis Topeka	President 785-478-9514
Chris Newell Topeka	Vice President 785-633-4854
Sherry Reed Topeka	Secretary 785-408-5060
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, 3717 SE 31st ST, 66605



**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@embarqmail.com](mailto:fdgruver@embarqmail.com)

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