



# *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 9**

**November 1, 2015**

## **Wes Chiles gives winter tips for ponds**

*By Sherry Reed*

Wes Chiles with Waterscape Concepts gave us several helpful tips for shutting down our ponds for the winter.



Photo by Sherry Reed

He recommended to stop feeding fish when the water temperature reaches 60 degrees. Also watch fish for any sign of stress before going into the winter.

The pump may be taken out or left in for the winter. If you leave the pump in your pond you need to watch for water loss due to ice buildup on the falls or from evaporation. Always keep pump completely covered with water in order to avoid pump damage. If you take the pump out of the pond make sure you have it cleaned well and store in a cool area. The pump should be serviced at least once a year by a professional to preserve the life of the pump.

It is important to have a clean pond going into the winter. There should be no leaves or dead animals, etc., which can cause fatal gases in the water and deprive the fish of beneficial oxygen.

A deicer is another important item for the wintertime pond. Keeping some type of small hole in the ice is very important to fish survival. Wes says to not break the ice with a hammer or other similar tool as this will stress the fish and could possibly kill them from the vibrations and noise.

He recommended a deicer with a thermostat. They commonly come on at 60 degrees and turn off at 72 degrees. A deicer should only melt a small hole in the pond and not melt the whole pond. If this happens, the deicer is too large for the pond. It is also important to have a guard on the deicer to protect any active, curious fish. Bubblers or aerators can also be used to keep a small hole in the pond.

You can add beneficial bacteria to your pond until the water temperature reaches 32 degrees.

As far as plants in the pond, hardy water lilies can be left in the pond by cutting each back to about 2 to 3

## **Monthly Meeting**

**6:30 p.m.**

**Nov. 18, 2015**

Historic Old Prairie Town, 124 NW Fillmore

**Pot Luck**

**Please bring table service and a dish to share.**

inches and setting them about 2 feet deep in the water.

Water iris can also be cut back and set about 2 feet deep.

Tropical water plants need to be kept inside for the winter. Wes recommended potting them in 50% sand and 50% potting mix with smaller gravel on top. Keep them covered with 1 inch of water under some type of lighting, such as fluorescent.

Lotus needs to freeze over. You don't drop it down any lower in the water but do not let it be below the ice line.

## **Minutes 10-18-2015**

President Tom Platis called the meeting to order. He thanked everyone who had volunteered at the Apple Festival at Ward-Meade earlier in the month.

The slate of officers were presented to the group again. Chris Newell and Mary Weaver declined taking the positions of president and vice-president. Further discussion was held and it was presented to the floor to anyone who might like to fill these positions. No one volunteered. Jim Green made a motion to carry over the slate of officers to the next meeting. Dale Jirik seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Chris Newell asked for volunteers to help work on the storage space expansion at Waterscape Concepts. He will contact those who volunteered.

Discussion about the Kansas Garden Show booth will be held at the next meeting.

Our next meeting will be the annual potluck held at Ward-Meade on November 18 at 6:30p.m.

Don Taliaferro made a motion to adjourn, Cheryl Saathoff seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned.

Sherry Reed Secretary



## Pond heaters are expensive to run

*The Pond Guy 10-28-15*

Pond heaters are expensive to run! But guess what? You don't need one in the first place!

Heaters are more frequently used in aquariums, particularly those that house warm-water fish like tetras, danios or angelfish.

In your pond, the fish will overwinter just fine without a heater—even if temperatures drop below freezing. Pond fishes like koi and goldfish naturally go into wintertime hibernation when temperatures fall. They'll stop eating, their metabolisms will slow way down and they'll snooze through the winter without worrying about how warm their water is.

However, if you live in areas that experience freezing temperatures that cause your pond to ice over, you do need to worry about keeping a hole in the ice. The hole allows toxic gases like ammonia to escape while allowing oxygen in, and your fish will need that fresh O<sub>2</sub>.

So how do you create that hole? Not with a pond heater! Check out these much cheaper alternatives:

- **De-Icer:** A de-icer floats on the water surface and melts a hole in the ice. Unlike a heater that actually warms the entire pond, A de-icer simply melts an opening in the ice sheet, thereby allowing for gas exchange.
- **Aerator:** Rather than create a hole in the ice from above, an aerator like the PondAir™ (for smaller ponds) or KoiAir™ (for larger ponds) circulates the water below the ice sheet. In areas with mild winters, that subsurface water movement will keep a hole in the ice—but when temps really dip, an aerator may not be enough to maintain a vent hole.
- **De-Icer, Aerator Combo:** An excellent and convenient option to consider is the PondAir™ & Thermo-Pond Combo. It combines both the Thermo-Pond de-icer and PondAir™ Aeration Kit, providing your water feature the one-two punch it needs to stay well-vented throughout the winter.

If you live in an area with temperatures that hover around the freezing mark, consider picking up a Thermo Cube®. It's a thermostatically controlled outlet that turns on when air temperatures drop below 35°F and turns off when air temps rise above 45°F.

So put that pond heater on Craigslist and invest in a de-icer, aerator and thermostatically controlled outlet. It'll save you money in the long run!

## Beneficial Bacteria in Winter

*Splash 1-06*

Many ponds in colder climates are dormant now with pumps and filters disconnected. Several subscribers have send emails asking what they could do about the pond becoming somewhat stagnant. One of the alternatives is to use a good cold weather beneficial bacteria product to help keep the pond working until warmer weather lets us

put some movement back into our garden pond.

There are a couple of products that are favorites to use for this purpose:

-- Microbe-Lift Autumn/Winter prep for a bacteria specially formulated to work in colder water temperatures and

-- Aqua One is a good, all-around beneficial bacteria product that works in almost any temperature.

We need to do our utmost to keep the pond healthy so it comes back to life in the spring in record time and as healthy as possible.

Anytime a pond starts to smell even just a little bit it is a sign that things are not well. This circumstance should be avoided at all cost and remedied at once if it occurs.



*Lois & Larry Ditmer dip beans and sauerkraut at Apple Fest in October.*

## Good crowd at Apple Fest

Beautiful weather enticed lots of people to the 2015 Apple Fest at Historic Old Prairie Town October 4.

Thanks to the TAWGS members who so generously gave of their time to help serve food for TAWGS, including: Tom and Helen Platis, Sue Mowder, Linda Reynolds, Sherry Reed, Bob & Cheryl Saathoff, Larry & Lois Ditmer and Floyd & Diane Gruver.



*Sherry Reed, Floyd Gruver & Linda Reynolds serve food at Apple Fest.*

# A pond in winter

by Mary Alice Kropp

Reprinted from Jan/Feb Water Garden News

It's November in New Hampshire. The sky is gray, the weather is raw and winter is most definitely in the air. There is a bit of snow on the ground, and the promise of more to come before spring returns. Everything, including the pond in the backyard, is closed and silent, awaiting the return of warmth and green.

And yet, there is a beauty in the winter pond. Not the lush, vibrant green beauty of the warmer weather, but a stark, clean beauty that is not apparent under spring and summer's cover of growth. Most of the plants are out of the pond, tender tropicals that require the relative warmth and light of the basement to survive the cold. But a few remain, stalwart, hardy individuals that brush off the cold with dormant nonchalance, awaiting the signals of sun and warmer temperatures to send up new growth. For now, they sleep in the deepest water, dark, barely seen reminders of the wonders of the seasonal cycles of life.

Around the pond, too, the plants have changed with the season. Perennials, like the garden mum, raise clean, skeletal stalks out of the snow cover. The vinca that creeps along the waterfall is a splash of bright green and cream, incongruous against the bare branches and clean outlines of the rest of the garden. Thyme, another evergreen, is a deep green mound, another plant whose special beauty stands out in winter.

Even the water changes at this time of year. It appears dark, probably because the sky is gray and dark above it so often. The inky depth even looks cold. Standing at the edge of the pond, looking into the almost impenetrable darkness, broken now and again by a flash of orange and white as a fish darts among the cover of bottom plants, one seems to be peering into a well of Winter.

Frosty days mean the heater must go into the water, to keep it from freezing over and killing the fish. But even this ever so mundane a device helps add to the beauty of the winter pond. The warmth from the heater causes fog to rise off the pond, reflecting the half-light of early morning and the lights surrounding the pond edge at night. Like fairy mist from some magical water garden, ghost tendrils of mist rise from the surface of the water, dancing slowly upward to disappear into the cold air. It is almost as if the pond breathes, each breath a frosty reminder that life remains.

Winter is a time of special beauty in a pond, but only if you look closely. It is too easy to think only of dead plants, bare water and fish that have dropped out of sight into the depths of the colder water. But there is beauty there, waiting to be seen and appreciated until spring comes again to renew our havens of water.

## **Pond Tip**

*Why are really red Koi so hard to find? U.S. water conditions are usually not very helpful: Our water tends to be somewhat alkaline, which produces good black coloring but makes the reds tend toward orange*



## **Shutting down waterfall for winter**

The Pond Guy

11-16-13

You want to shut down your waterfall for the season? You're not alone. When the outdoor temperatures dip, most people don't spend a lot of time lounging outside by their pond enjoying the sound of running water.

Though a pond with ice formations can create a beautiful scene, shutting down your waterfall or stream when it's not in use for the winter is a great way to save some money, prolong the life of your equipment, and prevent ice dams from forming and potentially draining your pond.

Putting your waterfall to bed for the winter can be done in just a couple of hours – or less if you have a helper. Here, we've outlined four simple steps to make the chore easy:

1. First, remove the pump from your pond. Store it in a 5-gallon bucket filled with water in a place that will not freeze, like your garage or basement, so the seals do not dry out.
2. Next, blow out your tubing with an air compressor. Though most tubing will be OK if water freezes in it, it's still a good idea to blast away all the gunk and debris that could be in there. Don't forget to cap it off to ensure no water or debris enters the tubing.
3. If your pump is in a skimmer box, drain the water to slightly below the weir door. You can also place a milk carton or 2-Liter bottle about ¼ filled into the skimmer. This will alleviate some ice pressure on the skimmer walls.
4. If you have biological filter media in your waterfall box, spray the filter media off with a hose to remove built-up gunk, and pump the water out of waterfall box and scrub it down. The filter media will be fine stored in the waterfall box for the winter.

Because your waterfall will be turned off and not oxygenating the water for your fish, don't forget to run an aeration system. Pond Logic® PondAir™ Aeration Kit is ideal for infusing O2 into ponds up to 2,000 gallons; Pond Logic® KoiAir™ Aeration Kit handles ponds up to 16,000 gallons. Both are energy-efficient and can be run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## **Pond Tip**

*Koi do not have stomachs, they digest their food in their intestine! This is part of the reason why it is important to switch to cool temperature food when the water temperatures fall - so undigested food does not get impacted in their intestine.*

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

February 17	Monthly Meeting
March 16	Monthly Meeting
April 20	Monthly Meeting
May 18	Monthly Meeting
June 15	Monthly Meeting
June 25-26	Topeka Pond Tour
July 20	Monthly Meeting
August 17	Monthly Meeting
September 21	Monthly Meeting
October 2	October Fest
October 19	Monthly Meeting
November 16	Monthly Meeting

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**Pond Tip**

*Warm spells throughout the winter may tempt you to offer food to your fish. It is much safer for the fish to avoid this temptation; fish cannot properly digest food in water below 50 degrees.*

**Your Dues are Due if your label reads  
10-15, 11-15 or anytime in 2014**  
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:

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