



"PONDERINGS"

Official Newsletter of The Tucson Watergardeners

www.tucsonwatergardeners.org

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Ready! Set! Grow! The 2007 Water Gardening Season Is Here!



Greetings From
The President!

I am looking forward to a new year with some fresh faces. Welcome to JoAn Stolley as our new editor, giving Gail Barnhill much-needed relief from that position. Gail will, of course, stay on as secretary, thereby making sure that we don't stray too far from our goals as a club. Karen Christianson has graciously agreed to continue as Member Chair and Bill Hudson has agreed to take over from Winifred Williams as Treasurer. Susan Kelly will also continue as Publicity Chair. We still have some positions to fill, so please help your club by volunteering, even if you can only do things some of the year. I always find that I get more out of any organization when I get more involved. We will try to make our topics of general interest and appreciate any input from you. As your brand new president, I need all the help I can get, both from all our experienced and our new members. I am looking forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Elizabeth Good

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- Board Meeting:** Thursday, February 15th
Hostess: Elizabeth Good
- General Meeting:** Thursday, February 22nd
7:30pm @ Jr League of Tucson
2099 E River Road
- Program:** "Old & New Approaches to
Spring Start Up of Your Pond"
By Pam Glenn (Member)
- Refreshments:** By: Committee Members



Let us Lotus!!!

The holidays came early for **Wayne Tomczyk**, TTW Vice President, with the December arrival of three wide squash pots, three bags of fertilizer pellets, and five lotus tubers. Over the course of the '07 season, Tomczyk will be working with a Colorado nursery to create a fairly controlled testing situation. The object is to prove that lotus can feel at home and thrive in our desert environment. His five charges include: "Mrs. Perry D. Slocum", "President" and "Empress." Wayne reports that the tubers have been planted and he may start seeing growth as early as late January or February.

Practice random acts of volunteerism!

Be an active 2007 member!

Please share your time, expertise, pond, bog
& water container gardens!



Aargh!

Spring Clean Up!

Remember this winter's winds and hard freezes? Well that's all behind us now, as we start the Tucson area water gardening season. It is vital to begin with a clean, healthy pond. So, here are a few spring cleaning reminders:

DO:

- ✓ Remove leaves, other debris and excess silt.
- ✓ Test your water quality.
- ✓ Inspect liner condition and repair. Check for leaks.
- ✓ Clean mechanical and bio-filters and replace filter media and UV components, as needed.
- ✓ Assess your plants, remembering that 60-70% water surface coverage by plants starves the algae and produces the oxygen essential to a healthy pond.
- ✓ Resist the urge to severely thin oxygenating grasses that are overgrown. Remove only about 10% every 10 days to forestall quick algae bloom.
- ✓ Prune excess and old foliage –save plant dividing for late April (May for tropical lilies). Begin fertilizing when pond temperatures reach 55-60 degrees.
- ✓ Select and plant new water plants. (Reminder...Save room for the Tucson Watergardener's Water plant Sale in May!)
- ✓ Begin feeding your fish when water temperatures reach 50 degrees. Medicate fish if stress or disease is spotted.

DON'T:

- ✓ Don't drain your pond completely, as you will be overrun with algae and lose beneficial bacteria.



PROFILING MEMBERS PROJECTS

"I'll never be without a pond again, and that's fine with my husband too!" is the reply from **Gayna Scott** (*member*) regarding her "ponding" experience! When Gayna and her husband, **Doug** (*member*), purchased their home in May 2001, they inherited a professionally built pond and landscape design that has been featured in Tucson Lifestyle magazine over the years.

Knowing nothing about water gardening, maintenance seemed daunting, and more like a science project. Gayna discovered TTW by accident, when attending a function at the Tucson Botanical Center. Thus began her learning experience about desert water-gardening by attending meetings since 2002.



The Scott water garden will appear in the "Lilypons Water Garden" Spring 2007 catalog. Congratulations!

The Scott fountain/pond is split level, with the top patio portion being a circular ground fountain bubbling up and flowing into a streaming bog garden for about 10 feet, then falling over a negative edge dropping 3 feet into a pond below which is 15' x 6' and roughly 3,200 gallons. **Carl Ragel** (*member*) from Natural Ponds & Gardens, in collaboration with Jeffrey Trent from Natural Order built the pond.

Gayna's advice is to start conversations with fellow TTW members, as everyone enjoys talking about their pond. Simply ask, "How is your pond?" and begin learning from others!

Aquatic Plant Profile

Featuring Plants That Love Our Desert Water Gardens



Water Hibiscus

(*Hibiscus moscheutos* (*Hibiscus palustris*))

I'm a Water Hibiscus, also known as a Swamp Hibiscus, or Swamp Rose mallow. A part of the Malvaceae plant family, the hibiscus is known as a woody shrub, with striking blossoms. In our desert climate, the Water Hibiscus is a perennial, and is considered a tropical marginal plant. Its flowers can be white or pink. Its blooms generally begin mid to late summer.

The Water Hibiscus loves full sun, but can also grow in part shade. When planting, be sure it has a large enough pot, as this hibiscus can grow from 4'-6' tall, and 2'-4' wide. Use a high quality soil, and, when placing the potted plant in the water, the crown should not be submerged, but about 1" or more above the water line. In the spring, a good quality fertilizer, such as Osmocote, is a must. If you are looking for conversation points in your water garden, the Water Hibiscus can be just that! *(Photo courtesy of Gail Barnhill's (member) garden.)*

Spring is also the time for repotting aquatic-loving plants and acquiring new ones. As you survey your situation, here's a guide to the categories of water plants that you may want to consider. In some cases, you may have too much of one type, and not enough of another -- both to add *visual interest* and to bolster the *bio-filtration* of your water ecosystem.

Categories of Water Plants

How is your mix of water plants?

- Shallow Marginals** (Happy in 6" of water)
- Deep Marginals** (Happy in 12" of water)
- Deep Water Plants** (Such as waterlilies)
- Submerged Oxygenators**
- Surface Floaters**
- Bog & Moisture Loving Plants**

2007 DUES BY MARCH 1st

2007 Future Programs

- March:** "Feng Shui For Water gardens"
By **Eric Cuestas-Thompson & Michael Bamba**, "Those Feng Shui Guys" (Members)
...Learn about the ancient Chinese art of placement and positive "Chi" in your garden!
- April:** "Divide & Conquer Water plants"
By **Gail Barnhill** (Member)
...Watch the ruthless dismemberment of aquatic plant rhizomes before your very eyes!

Tohono Chul Park 2006 Grant

Tohono Chul Park's 18,000 square foot *Desert Living Courtyard* offers homeowners new and creative ideas for using water-conserving plants and water conscious water features in livable landscapes. In 2006, **The Tucson Watergardeners (TTW)** awarded Tohono Chul Park a \$2,500 grant to help develop a **Wildlife Garden** pond as part of its *Desert Living Courtyard*.

The **Wildlife Garden** and pond replicates a riparian habitat in a rocky canyon, surrounded by over-sized specimen boulders, and complete with sparkling waterfall. The pond itself is of sufficient depth for native fish and incorporates planting pockets for potted emergent water plants. Under Tohono Chul's current permits with Arizona Game and Fish, a new population of endangered desert pupfish is now thriving in this garden.

The **Wildlife Garden** is designed with an appropriate biological filtration system and sump with auto fill to maintain a constant, high quality water supply for both plants and wildlife. Tom Buchanan, Director of Development and Marketing for Tohono Chul Park, indicated that by demonstrating the simplicity of this water feature, and the resulting benefits to both man and wildlife, visitors are discovering for themselves that water gardening is approachable and done right, quite appropriate for our desert environment.



Watergardening Classifieds

Available: From “Algae” and “Ambiance” to “Toxic Taros” –many subjects have been indexed in three years’ worth of our official newsletter, “Ponderings.” The years indexed are 2004, 2005, and 2006. This is a quick way to retrieve valuable information from past issues. The index and articles are available through: www.tucsonwatergardeners.org.

Attention Watergardeners! Your deadline is the 4th! If you need something or have something you want to sell or trade related to watergardening, this is *the* place to advertise. Please contact the editor *by the fourth of each month* with the item, so that it can be printed in that month’s newsletter. Best of all, it’s free!

Most Wanted: Members’ water features, ponds or aquatic plants specimens to showcase throughout this year’s newsletter. *Interested?* Please contact an ever-grateful Editor! Newsletter articles are also welcome!



The Wildlife Garden, Tohono Chul Park

One of the important purposes of the *Desert Living Courtyard*, which includes the **Wildlife Garden**, is to provide Park visitors take-home ideas for outdoor living spaces that can be easily reproduced. “The Tucson Watergardeners support of our ongoing commitment to water conservation and modeling wise stewardship of the Sonoran Desert means a great deal,” Buchanan stated. “We hope that many will want to emulate it – at least in a scaled down format.”

The garden’s layout, along with plant and resource lists can be found at: <http://www.tohonochulpark.org/desertliving/>

TWW began its Grants Program in 2003 with funds resulting from water plant sales and water garden tours. Promoting an appreciation and understanding of water gardening in the Sonoran Desert is a key purpose of the club.

See you at the meetin’ !

