



# PONDERINGS

Official Newsletter of The Tucson Watergardeners (TTW)

VOL IX JUNE 2007 No. 5

[www.tucsonwatergardeners.org](http://www.tucsonwatergardeners.org)

## Tour Ponds Wanted!

Ever gone on our annual Water Garden Tour? Betcha' at some point you said to yourself, "Gee, my water garden is as nice as that, but slightly different because I have....." Well, now is the time to let us know if you would like to be considered for this year's tour on Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup> (8:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.) by contacting Gail Barnhill and finding out the "particulars."



We are always looking for "new" ponds, that is, ponds that haven't been on our tour before, because each one has something new and different to offer!

While we won't deny that it's a bit more "work" getting ready for the tour (I've YET to find a tour garden that hasn't just/finally finished a long dreamed of "improvement or great inspiration!"), and you will be answering visitors' questions all day long -I *GUAR-N-TEE* that you will have a blast! This has been proven over and over again by previous tour garden owners who are always anxious to volunteer again! There's nothing as rewarding as having people visit and admire your work.

I need to hear from you as soon as possible. Please don't put off contacting me!

-- Gail Barnhill, Public Tour Chair  
[thepondlady@msn.com](mailto:thepondlady@msn.com)

### PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**Board Meeting.** Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup> 7:30 PM  
Hostess: Gail Barnhill

**General Meeting:** Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup>  
**7:30pm @ Jr League of Tucson**  
2099 E River Road

**Program:** "How To Make Your Own Fountain Head" by **Elizabeth Good**  
(TTW President)

**Refreshments:** Casey Case & HL Swain

**Door Prizes:** Share your "extra" plants & "stuff"



## Greetings From The President!

With June, we're over the halfway point in terms of TTW monthly meetings and special events. *Imagine that!* Thanks to all for every contribution you, as individual club members, are making to our 2007 season. Give yourself another pat on the back!

We now need to put some serious thought into candidates for our public Water Garden Tour 2007 currently scheduled for Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. This is a major club fundraiser to replenish our Grants Program. Live life on the edge! Volunteer!

Triumphing over technical difficulties, a special thanks to Carl Ragel for talking about the complex subject of pool/spa conversions.

*Elizabeth Good*

# Aquatic Plant Profile

Featuring Plants That Love Our Desert Water Gardens



**Obedient Plant** (*Physostegia virginiana*)  
(Photo courtesy of Casey Case's (member) garden.)

The Obedient Plant, sometimes called the False dragonhead, is a member of the Lamiaceae (mint) family. This herbaceous perennial grows from creeping rhizomes and likes moist soil or even just growing directly in the water. It will tolerate sunny or lightly shaded spots.

Most stunning about the Obedient Plant are its tooth-edged, leafy spikes covered with tiny snapdragon-like flowers. Its bloom colors can be in the violet/lavender shown in the photo, or in pink or white. And, where does this plant get its name? Each blossom can be rotated or twisted to face a different direction from the stem, and will stay in that new position obediently! The blossoms are long lasting as cut flowers and easy to arrange because of their "obedient" quality. The spikes themselves can reach heights of 3 to 4 feet.

The Obedient Plant is most frequently used along the fringes of a water garden. With its color and contrast, this aquatic plant is a terrific naturalizer and thrives in our desert water gardens.



*See you at our meeting!*

## Up Against The Wall!

Wall fountains certainly aren't the invention of modern day garden centers or landscape architects. Wall fountains go back to the times of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, when water was piped through the city walls, and spouted out, generally through a lion's mouth – an animal revered for its courage and strength. In the arid and dry climates of the non-Western world, the Persian and Mogul empires also created elaborate gardens with wall fountains.



A wall fountain is an excellent space saving feature for a smaller garden or to enliven a corner space or seating area of a larger garden. A common theme for most wall fountains is that the spout is generally an intricately designed feature, usually some type of being – whether mythical or real. An unusual and interesting pot may be another spout possibility. That can be where the imagination of the water gardener takes over!

A purchased wall fountain can range between about \$100-\$2,000. This month's program will go through the steps to create a custom-made wall fountain, where you create the design and control the project costs. Basic components of a wall fountain project include the reservoir, pump and tubing, a fountain head (the fun part!), and, of course, a convenient electrical outlet (ground fault circuit interrupter (GFI), preferably). Oh, then there's one other critical component – the wall surface to support your creation!



## PROFILING MEMBERS PROJECTS

Californians Wayne Tomczyk (TTW Vice President) and his wife, Anne-Lee (member) arrived in Tucson's Sonoran Desert three years ago because of Wayne's job transfer. What they immediately added to their awesome Catalina Mountains and Pusch Ridge vistas were water features that included a boulder-surrounded 22" deep pond and waterfall, several water pots, and an Eastern box turtle habitat.



A mosaic of interesting water features makes the Tomczyk's backyard a true desert oasis.

Not too long after arriving in the area, Wayne and Anne-Lee also joined TTW. They have learned a lot in the planning and maintenance of their desert-style water gardens. They both believe that large ponds require less maintenance than smaller water features, as they develop into their own self-sustaining ecosystems.

Some of their advice is to be very careful what you plant in your biofilter, as even potted plants, can be runaways if you don't check them often. And, definitely avoid Horsetail Rush anywhere near a biofilter, as its roots

tenaciously burrow through lava rocks. With the bottom of their pond lined with river rock, water lilies were just stuck among the rocks and not potted, resulting in impossible tangles of runaway lily rhizomes and roots! Boulders positioned by the water's edge can also cause footing problems and tend to cave in.



This season, the Tomczyk's are on a journey to prove that lotus can feel at home and thrive in our desert environment. Because of the ups and downs in our spring temperatures, the tubers were off to a slow start, but look at the lotus foliage now! Some of the leaves are even beginning to elevate off the water surface. This lotus growing experiment is being done in cooperation with a Colorado nursery. The Tomczyk's are avid Internet users, and had been customers of this nursery's web-based site for many of their water lilies and fertilizer spikes. A lot of their bog plants and floaters came via the way of TTW members' generosity in the club's monthly plant exchanges.

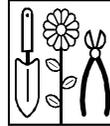
This very active couple are planning and designing their next big life move, which includes a new construction home in the Tucson Valley and Wayne's retirement. Yes! The plans for another water garden have already materialized! The big challenge will be relocating plants, fish, and many of their present water features to their new retirement home and sustaining all these life forms until the new pond is built.

And what does "Maybe", the box turtle,



think about all this? All she's hoping for is that her new habitat is first on the planning and construction list! And just *maybe* it is!

# This and That....



## Watergardening Classifieds

### 2007 Future Programs

**July:** "Bees & Water Gardens" By **Tom Martin**, AAA Africanized Bee Removal Specialists, Inc.  
...Tucson region honeybee colonies - facts!

**August:** "Pond BioFilter Panel" By **TTW Members** and Chaired by Gail Barnhill  
...So many pond biofilters, so many approaches! Come learn, ask questions, and have fun!

FOR INFO TO GO  
*Creating Bog Gardens!*

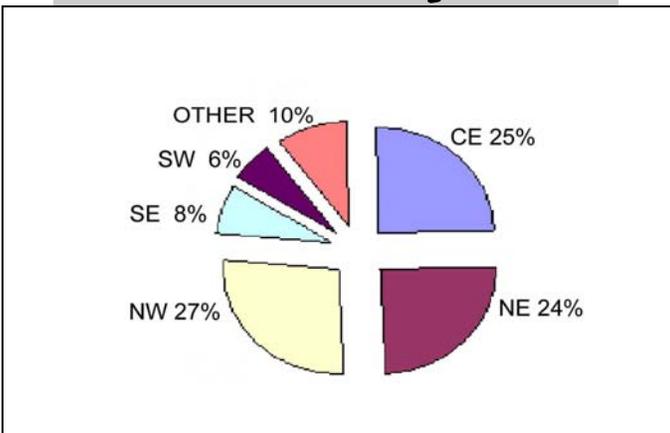
[www.tucsonwatergardeners.org](http://www.tucsonwatergardeners.org)

**Two Koi - Sell or Trade.** Two very healthy 12"-14" koi are in need of new homes. One is a Shiro Ogon (white & orange); the other is a Shiro Muji (all white). They have outgrown their habitat and owner's wallet! Contact Carolyn Meehan, 744-9236.

**2000-Gallon Pond Accessories & Koi.** Need to disassemble a pond. CalPump PW5500 5750 gal/hr, 8.7 amp (main pump) and a smaller back up CalPump; UV filter and water vacuum; 13 koi 6"-22", various colors, have lived among water lilies. All at \$1,000 or best offer! Reply to [bareenigma@cox.net](mailto:bareenigma@cox.net) or [gemininoir@hotmail.com](mailto:gemininoir@hotmail.com).

**Attention Watergardeners! Your deadline is the 4<sup>th</sup> of each month!** If you need something or have something you want to sell or trade related to water gardening. It's free!

### TTW Membership Profile



This profile is based on clustering of zip codes from membership as of April '07. **CE** = Central Tucson; **NE** = Northeast Tucson; **NW** = Northwest Tucson; **SE** = Southeast Tucson; **SW** = Southwest Tucson; and **OTHER** refers to PO box addressees and zip codes out of the immediate Tucson region. As of the end of April there were 106 combined single and family TTW memberships.



name  
that  
aquatic  
plant...

### TTW Contacts

- President:
- Vice Pres:
- Treasurer:
- Secretary:
- Membership
- Webmaster:
- Editor:
- Circulation: