

Ponderings

Conversation With Paul Roberts— Our Sixth Tucson Watergardeners President!

Volume XI, Issue 1

February 2009



What got you interested in water gardening?

Growing up in the Midwest, I spent a lot of time camping, hiking, boating, and other outdoor activities. I have always enjoyed the sound of rippling water. When we moved to Tucson I started with a small water feature on our balcony. This small feature grew and changed shape several times until I had a 150-gallon pond with a small waterfall on the balcony of our condo. In May of 2008 we moved into a house, which had an open backyard. That

What brought you to Tucson?

We came to Tucson on a temporary work assignment from Iowa. We fell in love with Tucson and made it a permanent move.

How long have you lived here?

We have been in Tucson for three years now.

NOTEWORTHY:

- *Welcome back to our 11th water gardening season as a club!*
- *Annual dues payable at our first general meeting.*

New Rates as of January 1, 2009:

\$ 20.00 Individual;

\$ 25.00 Household

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Ponders Calendar

General Meeting

Thursday, Feb 26th 7:30 PM @ Junior League of Tucson 2099 E River Road

Program: Spring Pond Start-Up by Nathan Novak, Owner, Canyon Pondscapes
Committee Volunteers Discussion

Lead by Casey Case (member)

Refreshments! Share your extra pond stuff!

Board Notes

Meeting Feb 8th
1:30 PM Host:
Paul Roberts

Note: A special Board meeting was also held Jan 11th.

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Clip & Save!

Watergardeners 2009 Calendar*

- FEB 26th** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- MAR 26th** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- APR 19th** General Meeting
Sunday 2:00 PM-4:00 PM
D. Jenks Residence
- MAY 17th** Annual Plant Sale
Sunday Reid Park 8:00 AM-1:30 PM
- MAY 28th** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- JUN 25th** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- JLY 23rd** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- AUG 27th** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson
- SEP 19/20** Public Water Garden Tour
Saturday & 8:30AM-2:30PM Daily
Sunday Locations to be announced.
- Sep 27th** General Meeting
Sunday 2:00 PM-4:00 PM
E. Good Residence
- OCT 4th** Members' Potluck
Sunday President's Residence
- OCT 22nd** General Meeting 7:30 PM
Thursday Junior League of Tucson

* Dates for Board meetings to be announced in *Ponderings*.

Conversation With Paul Roberts

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is when we built a 2000-gallon pond with waterfall. Dan Jenks (TTW member) was the one that really started me with water plants and it has been an addiction ever since. Dan invited me to a Tucson Watergardeners meeting and I was really hooked. I have learned so much from the programs at the meetings and from the members themselves. That was one of the first things that impressed me with the Tucson Watergardeners, was their willingness to share ideas, solutions, and past problems and resolutions that they have encountered.

Other hobbies or interests?

I also enjoy gardening, I am still working on getting Iowa tomatoes to grow here, traveling, and, of course, the grandson.

What are the major goals as President you would like the club to achieve?

I would like to see a heightened awareness throughout the pond, fish and water gardening community of the Tucson Watergardeners. This is a great resource for people that are just starting a pond or water gardening project. Whether that be four small clay pots with water running from one pot to another, which is what I started with, or a major pond project. But the resources don't stop with just a start-up project. Many experienced water gardeners are looking to try new plants, like the tropical water lilies, which we will have for sale at the plant sale this year, or they may be experiencing water condition, plant or fish problems. The combined knowledge and experience of the membership is outstanding.

What key points would you like to convey to the membership in this first issue of Ponderings?

To all those members that have not been to a meeting in a while, come and check out a meeting and program. I think you will enjoy yourself and I bet you will learn something. I have yet to attend a Tucson Watergardeners meeting without walking away from the meeting with new knowledge, ideas, and having met some great people.

Leak Detection

If you start your pond season with a sudden or an unusual drop in water levels, a leak may be present. Gradual water loss may be the result of evaporation at the highest peak of our hot summer season. However, springtime water level drops may be a different story!

Leak detection is really a process of isolating segments of the total pond system, and using the process of elimination to pinpoint the source of a leak. This bit of detective work is every pond owner's worst nightmare. However, if not promptly attended to, water usage bills can rapidly escalate. Many leaks are due to low edges surrounding the pond, waterfall or stream. Perhaps the pond has settled after winter weather or heavy rainfalls. Wet gravel or wet mulch around a pond edge is a very good clue. Backfilling to raise the edge or compacting soil under the liner may easily solve this overflow—and leakage problem.

Check for obstructions in waterfalls and streams. Someone, such as a child, or even a large animal, such as a raccoon, may inadvertently have dislocated rocks so that water is now spilling over the liner. Excess plant growth and root systems—or even algae, may also be diverting the water, and need to be cleared out so that the water can freely pass. Spring is an optimum time to

prune or remove obstructing plants. Whether or not you are on a leak detection mission, water plants surrounding a waterfall and bio-filter should be checked for overgrowth as part of your periodic maintenance chores. If the stream has a concrete liner, cracks in that liner may also be the source of the pond leak. Be sure that your pump is properly flowing and that all filter pads are cleaned. The next step is to turn your pump off for about 12 hours and check the pond water level. Allow gravity to step in and the water level to drop. Be patient as this can take a few hours to a few days! If the water level does not drop, then the waterfall or stream needs to be rechecked. If, in this process, water is *not* flowing through your biofilter for more than an hour, all beneficial bacteria will die off, and have to be replenished.

If you have a skimmer, one of the first suspects is that the seal for the skimmer faceplate has failed or that somehow water is seeping behind the faceplate and the vinyl liner. If the leak drops below the skimmer faceplate, where the water level stops dropping, you have found the lowest part of the leak. If the pond perimeter is easily accessible, a visual check

of that perimeter for wet soil areas may be helpful. If the perimeter is not accessible, then, at this point you may have to clear things out by placing fish and plants in temporary storage tanks to better see the shelves, side walls of the pond liner or the bottom drain. Fish need continuous aeration and the holding tank should be out of the sun. Look for cracks, tears, and areas that stay wet, and carefully check around any pipes, skimmers or bottom drains. Liners generally have an algae build up, so that makes leak or hole detection more challenging. This is a tedious process that could involve moving rocks and gravel, as well as searching for the leak with both your eyes and hands. Be sure to check the general health of the pond liner to make the patch or replace liner decision. Liner patch kits are available through a variety of commercial sources. It is also important to check for seals around bio-filters to ensure that these seals are still tight. In the desert, rodent damage to pipes is also a possibility for water leakage.

Remember to be patient and make leak detection a step-by-step process of elimination. Of course, calling a pond professional is always an option for solving a serious leakage problem.

An addiction to water gardening is not all bad when you consider all the other choices in life! *Author Unknown*



Watergardening Classifieds

Sell or Trade Water Garden Items. Ad space is *free* to members! Write-ups on your water garden items must be in to the editor by the 4th of each month.

President:	Paul Roberts	paulrwi@aol.com
Vice President:	Ken Canada	kcanada1@cox.net
Treasurer:	Bill Hudson	lloydhudson@cox.net
Secretary:	Wayne Tomczyk	waynet@us.ibm.com
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To promote responsible ideals of water gardening among our members.

Ponder's Spring ABC's

Aquatic plants covering 60-75% of the water surface by high summer control pond algae growth.

Bio-filters need to be checked and filter media maybe replaced periodically.

Check your pond for cracks and leaks.

Dead plant material and fallen leaves –get 'em out of the pond!

Electrical safety around ponds – think Ground Fault Interrupters (GFI's) when planning new ponds.

Feed fish coming out of hibernation with *low* protein food, like Cheerios, after the water temperature is over 50°

Gambusia are excellent small fish for fighting mosquitoes.

Hibernating waterlilies should be moved closer to the water surface for spring sun.

Inch: 1" of fish for each 1 square foot of water surface is the rule of thumb to ensure no overcrowding.

Jump start your pond's biological cycle by adding beneficial bacteria to your pond.

Kitty litter (unimproved, unscented) is a terrific planting medium for water plants.

Leaks....aaargh...see article this issue!

Muck...a little ensures good bacteria; too much (over 1" deep) is a bad thing in the nitrogen cycle!

Natural pond filters include water plants such as all rushes.

Oxygenators are important in the water garden plant mix.
Pond temperatures reaching 55° –66° F, begin fertilizing water plants.

Quality of pond water is important; check pH level –7.0 is ideal! Time for a partial spring water change?

Rhizomes...time to think about plant dividing mid-March.

String algae – get rid of this spring ponder's nemesis!

Tucsonwatergardeners.org ...have you visited our website?

Use bigger plants at the back of the pond – design your plantscape.

Volunteers for TTW committees are needed *early* in our year!

Waterlilies include both Hardy and Tropical classes.

Xeriscaping and water gardening both conserve water resources in our desert environment.

You don't drain a pond completely to cure algae...makes it worse!

Zephyr (Rain) Lily – a great tropical marginal for the desert.