

Ponderings

Official
Newsletter of
The Tucson
Watergardeners

Volume XII Issue 2

March 2010

Spring Is About Plants!



It was great to see many of you at the first meeting of the season. A special welcome to all of our new members! I think you will find the TWG members to be more than willing to answer any of your questions that you might have.

Spring time is always an exciting time of year for water gardening. Our ponds, plants and fish are starting to come out of their winter hibernation. This can also be a time of issues and concerns, including string algae, sludge, fish health, dividing plants, fertilizing, and overall water quality. Be sure to attend the March general meeting to get answers to these and other issues that you might have about your pond or water feature.

A couple of reminders, we are actively recruiting for ponds to be on this year's pond tour, in September. Please contact myself or JoAn Stolley for more information. Also membership dues need to be paid. There were several of us, myself included, that forgot to pay our dues at the last meeting. Please make the effort to be a member in good standing. See you at the meeting!

Paul Roberts



Ponders Calendar

General Meeting

Thursday, March 25th 7:30 PM @
Junior League of Tucson 2099 East
River Road

**Program: "Plants In The Spring—
What Should I Be Doing?"** by Lisa
Ogren, Mountain View Koi Fish & Nursery,
Hereford, AZ

Refreshments by Casey Case, Dan & Sher
Stalker

Thank you!

Share your extra plants & stuff!

Board Meetings Date/Location

Thursday, April 22nd,
7:00 PM
Host: Paul Roberts

Note the date change!

Plant fertilizer spikes
and tabs available at
our General Meetings.
\$5.00 a package. Ex-
act change is appreci-
ated!

Memberships can be paid at our
upcoming General Meeting or mailed
to:

Mary McMacken, Treasurer

The Tucson Watergardeners

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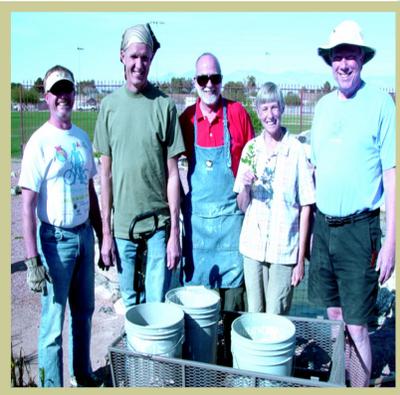
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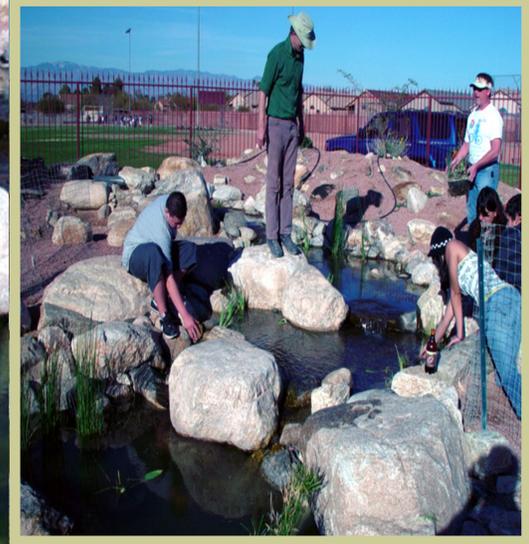
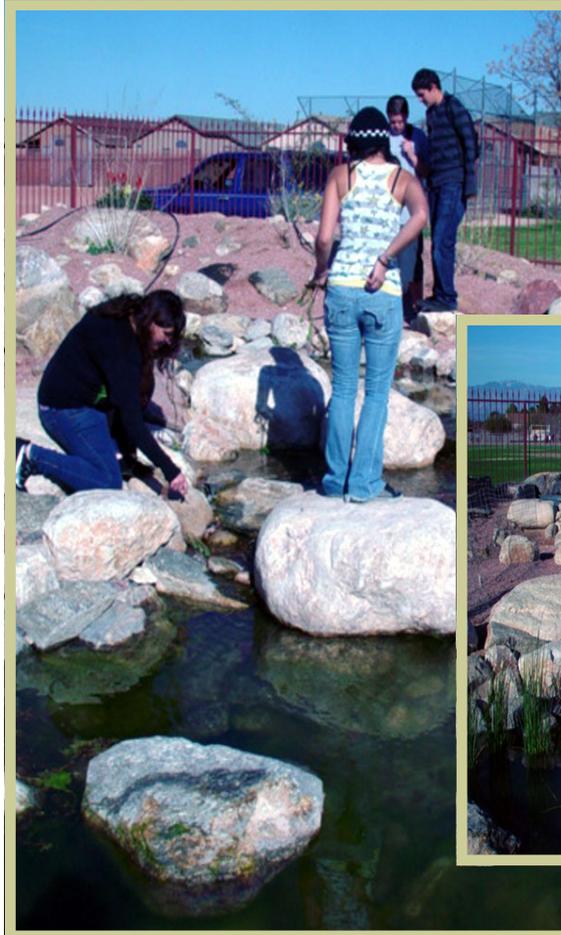
Plants For Desert View



Dan Jenks leads the project.



Helping Club Hands (left to right): Tony Shrader, Smokie Steffe, Dan Jenks, Casey Case, and Ted Bahn of Massachusetts (guest of Smokie and Casey).



Tucson's Desert View High School Botanical Garden Project.

George Meisch (green shirt and hat in far right picture) is Project Manager for the botanical garden. Alyssa, Angelica, Ghazal, Juan, and Luis were Desert View students helping to repot and place aquatic plants in the school's new pond.

Mary Lindley, a former Tucson Watergardener, recently contacted Paul Roberts, Tucson Watergardeners President, regarding the club's assistance to disestablish her pond and redistribute her plants, liner, and pump. Paul connected the proverbial dots between Mary and Desert View High School requirements. The end result was a successful transfer of aquatic plants between the two ponds!

"Every accomplishment starts with a decision to try."

Anonymous

Creation of the Desert View Botanical Garden has been a multi-year project for George Meisch, a Counselor at Desert View and Project Manager, as well as mentor, for the school's gardening club, Desert Connections.

The July 2009 issue of Ponderings reported that the Desert View pond had transformed from planning to reality in April 2009. Included as part of that project was The Tucson Watergardeners \$1,280 grant to the high school for the pond portion of their botanical garden. However, going into the winter of 2009, there were relatively few pond plants. The addition of a full array of aquatic plants was envisioned as an important 2010 project.

Dan Jenks, Tucson Watergardeners Vice President, spearheaded this transfer effort. Everything came together on February 17th, with a small group of club water gardeners meeting George and his students for an afternoon of demonstrations, repotting, and lots of aquatic plant questions and answers. George and his students did most of the marginal and water lily plant placements in their project pond. Now...for that warm spring growing weather!

Being Inspired!

Every water garden project starts with an inspiration. For Steve and Jean Walkosak (new members), that source just happened to be attending the club's series of public pond tours over the past years, as well as last fall's club meetings.

The Walkosaks have been in their present residence since 1984. Since that time, Steve reworked the covered patio area. In 2001, they built a pergola, designed as an extension to the original covered patio area. But...*something was missing!*

Attending club events provided them their answer. After some discussion about where to place their envisioned pond, the decision was made to locate their new water garden under the original pergola –and just off the main patio area.

With shovel and wheelbarrow in hand, Steve began digging his first pond last fall. Reflecting back on this time, "We went into it pretty well blind" was his tell-all comment. However, he wasn't completely alone, in that another long time club member, Kerry Shockley, provided Steve invaluable advice, particularly about filtration design.

The result of his labor is a pond that is approximately 16' in length and 8½' wide, with sloping sides that reach a depth of 28". It was filled with water in early December. The pond is supported by three pumps: two Maxi-Jet 1200 submersible pumps supporting under gravel filters and a Pondmaster Model 7 700 GPH supporting the waterfall feature.

Innovative use of trash-bound carpeting provided that much needed padding between the soil and the pond's vinyl liner, 45 mil EDPM by Firestone. The liner was obtained from Horizon, a local wholesale irrigation supply company. Steve constructed a berm around the pond's edge, and did the edge finishing work with a mixture of cement, Sakrete Concrete Glue, cement color, and various sizes of river rock. Some of his biggest "lessons learned" were about insuring that all sides of a pond are level with each other in a flat ground situated pond and that you should gather as much information as possible from all kinds of sources before turning that first shovel full of soil.

Part of the pond design includes a small bog area which has been planted with marginals such as Umbrella Grass, Snowball Plant, Pennywort, and Yerba Mansa. Four water lilies have been embedded in the gravel in the deepest parts of their new pond. Goldfish and Gambusia have also been added as permanent residents. There is definite excitement in their voices as Steve and

Jean begin to watch their new pond come to life and go through its seasonal cycles. "Listening to the water and watching its movement is very soothing," Jean offers.

For the club's "old time" ponders, the Walkosak story brings back all kinds of great memories about first ponds and first water garden discoveries! Thank you, Steve and Jean, for sharing with all of us!



The Big Dig



Carpet Padding



The Walkosak's New Pond!



Watergardening Classifieds

Tropical Water Lilies. Casey Case (886-7211) has about seven tropicals ready for new homes. Mature plants \$20.00 each. Must be kept in warm water during this spring transition period. Call her for more info.

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.

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To promote an appreciation and understanding of water gardening...



Divide & Conquer Your Plants

Spring is a great time to divide your water plants!

Get organized by first gathering your materials and tools close at hand. Items on your list: plastic sheet or tarp to contain the mess; watering hose; planting medium; fertilizer spikes or granules; a sufficient number of pots or containers suitable for all the divided water plants; pea gravel or other small rocks; hand spade, garden shears. If the task is big, a shovel or even a power Sawzall type tool may be needed. *Plan the size of your pots to allow for a couple of year's worth of growth, so that you are only re-potting every two to three years.* Working in the shade is preferable, and, keeping your plants wet at all times during the dividing process is a MUST. Some folks also prefer working with rubber gloves to help protect their hands.

Use a garden hose to gently wash away the soil, leaving the entire root system exposed. This works well on water lilies. Some of the marginals, such as sedges, may have such an entanglement of roots engulfing the pot that cutting or breaking the container may be the only solution to extracting the plant.

Hardy and tropical water lilies prefer pots that are shallow and wide. A 2-to 5-gallon container is ideal. Hint: A great source for inexpensive plastic containers is discount stores. Fill half the pot with planting medium and fertilizer spikes or tabs to ensure abundant blooms. Tropical water lilies should be planted *at the center* of the pot. Hardy water lilies need to be planted *at the side* of the pot at about a 45° angle, with the growing end of the rhizome pointed toward the middle of the pot. Crowns must be left uncovered. Gently cover the root with another thin layer of a soil/sand mix and top with a recommended 1" layer of pea gravel to hold the water lily in place. Wet the soil mixture in the pot, then gently lower the newly potted plant back into the water. Six inches of water covering the crown is a great start. As the water lily grows, the pot can be lowered to an 18"-24" depth.

If the marginal being repotted is a bulb plant, then gently pull the bulbs apart by hand. Plants, such as reeds, with creeping roots may be divided by levering apart the roots. Cut off old roots, remove dead leaves, and trim top growth back to 3-4 inches. Add planting medium below the roots and around the sides, being careful not to cover the crown. A long-lasting fertilizer spike or time release granules also assures their growth. A 1" layer of pea gravel helps hold both the soil and plant in place. Be sure to wet the planting medium before lowering the pot back into the pond. Oxygenators can simply be tied together and weighted down in the bottom of a pond, or even grown in a mesh bag.

Reserve your "extras" for our **May 16th Annual Plant Sale!** Remember that bringing already potted plants to our sale allows the club to charge a bit more and helps our Grant Fund coffer.