

Ponderings

Official
Newsletter of
The Tucson
Watergardeners

Volume XIV, Issue 7

August 2012



The blue violet blooms of summer Thalia



Ponders Calendar

General Meeting

Thursday, August 23rd 7:30 PM @
Junior League of Tucson 2099 E River
Road

Program: Pond Filtration—Different Perspectives: A Panel Discussion

*Come & hear your fellow club members talk
about filtration systems and answer your
questions. Lots of discussion!*

Refreshments by the Tomczyk's & Pusztai's
Share your extra pond stuff! Raffle, too!

*Officially called the Hardy
Water Canna Thalia
dealbata, thalia can soar
to heights over 6' in our
desert water gardens.*

Board Notes

Our next Board meeting
is scheduled for
**November 8th at 7:00
PM**, Junior League of
Tucson Board Room.
This is a 2012/2013 Joint
Board. *Please mark your
calendars!*

NOTEWORTHY:

*With our fall self-
guided tour
scheduled for
September 8th &
9th, there will be
no public meeting
in September. The
next public meeting
—and last of the
season, will be
Thursday, October
25th.*

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“Watergardening Possibilities” Self Guided Pond Tour

IMPORTANT TOUR INFORMATION

WHEN:

Saturday, September 8th
Sunday, September 9th

TIME: 9:00 am—3:00 pm daily
(Times are for both the gardens and Tour Central.)

TOUR CENTRAL: Tucson Koi & Water Gardens, 3372 N. Dodge Boulevard will be hosting the club’s Tour Central. Ray March and Michael Young of our club will be managing Tour Central.

COST: It’s **FREE** to club members, as well as the public!

WHAT’S ON TOUR: There will be **eight locations** on this year’s tour: three in the Northwest; three in Central Tucson; and, two on the east side. All gardens, with the exception of one on the east side, will be open *both* days. *One garden is Saturday only.* Sites were selected that best represent terrific collections of aquatic plants, as well as presenting a wide range of ideas for developing water gardens —hence, the title “Watergardening Possibilities.” The tour covers gardens ranging from professionally designed vistas to do-it-yourself projects on smaller residential lots.

GUIDE TO SPECIFIC TOUR LOCATIONS

There will be *three* ways to obtain specific tour location and garden descriptions:

- Club members will receive a Tour Guide in the mail and/or as a PDF attachment to an email around September 1st.
- The Tour Guide will be posted in PDF at the club’s web site around September 1st: [http:// tucsonwatergardeners.org/](http://tucsonwatergardeners.org/)
- Printed Tour Guides will be available at Tour Central on the days of the tour.

Here’s the web link to our Tour Poster —pass it along!
<http://tucsonwatergardeners.org/Tour2012.pdf>

TOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

At our August meeting, sign-up sheets will be available, as three of the tour sites and Tour Central have requested club members to assist with tour directions and meeting/greeting functions. Two “shifts” for each day are required: 9:00 am—12:00 am & 12:00 am—3:00 pm. Volunteers are needed for one Northwest site; two Central sites, and Tour Central.

A Bit Of Other Club Business

A couple of important notes:

At our October public meeting, the club votes on its **2013 Officer & Board of Directors** candidate slate. *Do you have time to help move the club forward as either an Officer or Board member?*

There will be no September issue of **Ponderings** this year. The Tour Guide will be the club’s September publication. The last newsletter of the season will be published in October.

We hope to unveil the Tour Raffle Prize at our August meeting! Tickets are \$1.00 each; or, 6 tickets for \$5.00.

Rocks in the Pond – Boon or Boondoggle?

By Carl Ragel, *Guest Contributor*

There are many ways to build ponds – some are just right for you – others, not so friendly. Up until about 1997, most ponds were reinforced concrete, liner, or concrete over liner. Either way, you had a surface you could walk on for your plant maintenance, etc. with a decent pair of water shoes.

Then along came the prefabricated skimmers and upflow water falls systems. They were revolutionary hardware for the time and they came with a system of putting it all together. The pond industry started using the skimmers and falls right away, along with rocks within the water as a liner cover. The theory was that the rocks could form planters and were supposed to provide more surface area for bacterial activity.

The rock covering concept sounded worth exploring. To that end, our business built a third of our 1998 test pond that way, along with two others ponds for clients. The feedback we got from our clients, and working in the test pond, was that the rocks on the floor were rough on the ankles and the stones, although ideally smooth, would slide on the algae under them, like a lubricant. We also annually drained the test pond, harvesting the water from that pond and found the areas with rock had a much larger amount of anaerobic bacteria and pond pudding than the other 2/3 of the pond, which was made of concrete. In thinking this through, rocks on the pond surface aid bacterial action *if there is flow around, and if possible, underneath them*. However, most ponds don't have this flow, so there is stagnation.

About 2001, rock was removed from the test pond, replacing it with embedded rocks in a special mortar, so there were no more areas underneath to trap muck, as well as being far safer for walking and working with plants. And you could still see the rocks – they just weren't loose anymore. This limited the opportunity to trap goop under them, where your pond's flow would aid your bacterial program – if it could only get to the material so it could work.

We have done this mortared rock program on some new ponds, and others where the clients were not happy with the floor or the planters, which require more vertically placed stones, many of which move

easily since they are underwater. I believe an inch or two of rock can be beneficial *with good flow*, but we've hauled out excessive rock up to 18" deep, installed after the fact by other pond contractors. We've done too many pond cleanouts where the presence of rock made the job take 3-4 times longer than if it were a solid surface.

My thoughts are that the rock is a great idea for a quick interior. However, there are more efficient alternatives. The application of mortared rock, or, "Permadirt," which is a colored, exposed aggregate fiber-reinforced covering over the liner, makes for a healthier pond and cleanup far easier.

Editor's Note: Carl is a long time club member and owns Carl Ragel's Natural Pools & Gardens in Tucson.



Watergardening Classifieds

For Sale At Our August Meeting: Fertilizer Tabs \$5/pkg; Fertilizer Spikes \$7/pkg; Club T-Shirts \$10; Baseball Caps \$12; and, Visors \$12. *Exact change would be appreciated.*

WANTED: Goldfish. If you are looking to thin out your goldfish population, contact Steve at steve@x-streamponds.com He can provide homes for them!

Your 2012 Board Officers & Directors

President: JoAn Stolley jstolley@cox.net
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The Tucson Watergardeners
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Structural Beauty of Pistia Stratiotes—
Water Lettuce

Our web address: <http://tucsonwatergardeners.org/>

Aquatic Plant Profile



Common Arrowhead
Sagittaria latifolia

Water Plantain family
(Alismataceae)



Sagittaria latifolia is a plant found in shallow wetlands and is sometimes known as broadleaf arrowhead, duck potato, Indian potato, or wapato. This marginal does very well in our desert ponds. Common Arrowhead produces edible tubers that were extensively used by the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Broadleaf arrowhead is a variable-sized (can grow to over 4' in height) perennial growing in colonies that can cover large amounts of ground. Despite the name Duck Potato, ducks rarely consume the tubers, which are usually buried too deep for them to reach, although they often consume the seeds.