

Ponderings

Official
Newsletter of
The Tucson
Watergardeners

Volume XIV, Issue 2

March 2012

NOTEWORTHY:

- * *Membership dues for members wishing to be included in the 2012 Directory must be paid by April 15th.*
- * *Time to start thinking about the plants that you will be dividing and providing to the plant sale in May.*



Spring Fertilizing and Dividing Time for Great Blooms is Here !!



Ponders Calendar

General Meeting

Thursday, Mar 22nd 7:30 PM @ Junior League of Tucson 2099 E River Road

Meet & Greet for Newcomers from 7:00 - 7:30 Hosted by Lorraine Barker

Program: Aquaponics-An Overview

Presented by Dr. Stéphane Herbert-Fort
Founder of Local Roots Aquaponics

Refreshments

By Casey Case and Klara Cserny

More great prizes will be raffled !!

Aquaponics Defined

Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture (raising fish) and hydroponics (growing plants in water). In aquaponics one creates a contained, recirculating ecosystem that is balanced to be mutually beneficial for the plants and for the fish. Aquaponic systems conserve water and can be extremely productive.

Inside this issue:

<i>Rootin' Around</i>	2
<i>To Fence or Not to Fence</i>	3
<i>Know Your Lilies</i>	4

Roots aren't the most attractive part of the plant, but they are essential. Roots act as a plant's support, also drawing minerals from the water and surrounding soil, and sometimes storing food. Corms, rhizomes, and tubers are also part of root systems, and either bear buds from which new plant shoots arise, or serve as food-storing underground stems.

Just as with their terrestrial counterparts, spring is the time to think about dividing, trimming, repotting, and propagating aquatic plants. Water plants can get very root bound, if left too many years untouched in your pond. It's good to check your pond plants out every couple of years to see what needs attention. Not every plant needs attention every year. In many cases, aquatic plants can jump the pot if ignored over a long period of time, and, begin to burrow into pond vinyl and concrete liners –even through those liners to create holes and leaks -- in a worst case scenario.

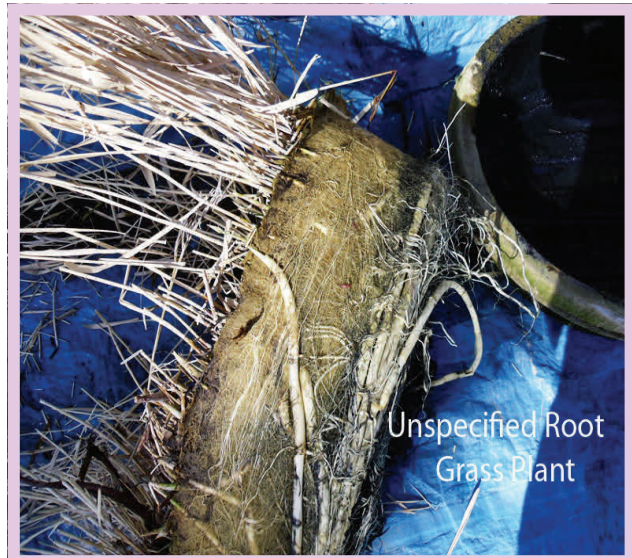
Dragging the overgrown pot or plant out of the pond is the first challenge. There is no "right" way; steps leading down into a pond can help with this task. Because these are aquatic plants, buckets with water should be available. Keeping the roots moist is essential. Try to work away from the direct sunlight. A plastic canvas or old shower curtain is a good backdrop to confining the messy dividing and repotting processes. A wheelbarrow can also serve that purpose.

By all means have a garden hose available, as carefully washing away soil from the roots makes it easier to see where the cutting or dividing should be directed. Your aquatic soil mixture and fertilizer, as well as planting containers, should already be prepared for the cuttings or transplants. Remember that all blooming aquatic plants need a high middle number fertilizer to maximize those blooms –fertilizing is not just for water lilies.

Tackling aquatic plant roots can be very challenging, so tools are needed that will do the job efficiently. We're not talking just a pair of scissors, small pruning shears, or a spade. While these are helpful, the power of electric tools, such as a Sawzall, are sometimes the only way to penetrate large clumps of root bound plants, like those in the sedge and cattail families. Sometimes, you just have to be ruthless –and dividing aquatic plants is one of those times!

The photos at the right give a sense of the wide variety of aquatic plants and their respective root systems that may be encountered.

Next month...detailed discussion on propagating and planting waterlilies.



To Fence or Not To Fence



Learning About Waterlilies...

Through our web site, the club was asked by Tressa Axelrod, Grade 4, Montessori Schoolhouse, about how she could learn more about waterlilies. Casey Case, our "Tropical Waterlily Mom," provided her that opportunity last fall. Casey gave Tressa a cutting from a hardy water lily rhizome; a potted viviparous tropical water lily; and, three leaf cuttings to propagate later –and spent a very delightful afternoon with her. Afterwards, Tressa wrote a comprehensive report on the subject for her school project. Perhaps there's a career in botany germinating!

About our Speaker..

Dr. Stéphane Herbert-Fort has been an organic gardener for over a decade. He moved to Arizona in 2005 as a graduate student in Astronomy at the University of Arizona. After completing his PhD he decided to take his life in a new direction, one that combined his love of organic gardening with research science. Local Roots Aquaponics was born.

In his presentation to the Tucson Watergardeners, he will discuss the pros and cons of aquaponics, compared to traditional gardening, hydroponics, and aquaculture, as well as the emerging role of pond-based aquaponic systems. He will discuss the different styles of aquaponic systems, the materials used to build them, and what is required to run them successfully. Come hear what all the excitement is about!

Spring is the time for thinking about building that new watergarden or fish pond. If you are thinking "bigger", rather than smaller, then the addition of a safety barrier around your pond area may be required. Most of the building codes in the surrounding municipalities and towns base their pool code (read that to be any body of water, regardless of its purpose) on the 2006 International Residential Code for One- and Two-Family Dwellings, Appendix G, published by the International Code Council (ICC).

Here's a sampling of local code requirements:

Pima County: Any body of water over 24" in depth requires a 4' barrier/fence.

Tucson: Any body of water over 24" in depth requires a 5' barrier/fence.

Oro Valley: A 4' barrier/fence is required if the body of water meets any one of the following criteria: over 24" in depth; over 150 square feet of water surface area; or, the volume of water is greater than 2,500 gallons.

Sahuarita: There is no fencing requirement, regardless of depth, as a watergarden or fish pond is not considered a "pool." However, a guard rail is required if there is more than a 30" change in elevation, e.g., walkway to actual pond. Even without a fencing requirement, it is very important to consider liability issues.

Editor's Note: The above is only a representative sampling of requirements. Please check with the municipality or county you are in for their specific building code requirements related to your project; or, to get more details regarding requirements or permitting processes.

Your 2012 Board Officers & Directors

Handy reference to clip & save!

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Watergardening Classifieds

Friends of Fort Lowell Park, (a non-profit all volunteer group of park users) adopted the park here in Tucson a few years ago, wishes to find new homes for red-eared slider turtles that are overrunning the park pond. If you are interested in adopting any of these turtles you may contact Pam Glenn (748-1417) and she will arrange for you to be contacted by Fort Lowell volunteer for more information.



The Tucson Watergardeners
7033 E Paseo San Andres
Tucson, AZ 85710



Ruby eyed Sagittaria or Aztec Arrowhead
Family: Alismataceae

Please visit our website at <http://tucsonwatergardeners.org/>

Know Your Lilies



Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis latifolia*)
Family: Liliaceae



Bog Lily (*Crinum americanum*)
Family: Amaryllidaceae



Rain Lily (*Zephyranthes*)
Family: Amaryllidaceae

All these lilies are terrific desert bloomers!