

# Ponderings

Official  
Newsletter of  
The Tucson  
Watergardeners



**Water Scorpion** Photo taken by Jeff Babson at the Garden Canyon, Huachuca Mountains

**Volume XV, Issue 3**

April 2013



## NOTEWORTHY



*Sign up for your aquatic plant donations at our April meeting. We are in need of **marginals, floaters, and oxygenators** for our May sale. Thank you!*



## Ponders Calendar

### General Meeting

**Thursday, April 25th, 7:30 PM** at the  
Junior League of Tucson  
2099 E. River Road

**Program: The Little Wonders Swimming  
In Your Pond** by Jeff Babson, Environmen-  
tal Educator, Sky Island Tours

*(More about Jeff & the program on page 2.)*

### Refreshments & Thanks to:

Bob & Arnelle Publicover

*Yes, we will have an April raffle!  
Share your extra plants and stuff!*

### Board Meetings Date/Location

#### Next Meeting:

**July 18th  
Thursday  
7:00 PM**  
at the Junior  
League of  
Tucson

### Board Room

*Club members  
are welcome to  
attend Board  
meetings.*

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## Those Little Wonders

—Our April Program

It's a thriving world that many "ponders" don't really think about! When we create desert ponds — with wonderful collections of aquatic plants and other creatures, the world of freshwater invertebrates inevitably finds our water-filled oases.

We are delighted to welcome back Jeff Babson, owner of Sky Island Tours, which is a natural history education and eco-tour company. Jeff talked to our club in 2011 about Dragons and Damselfish; and, he lectured our membership on Toads and Frogs in Southern Arizona in 2012.

*Never fear!* The Water Scorpion featured on our front page is not really a scorpion at all. It is also referred to as the needle bug or water stick insect.



**Water Strider**

*Photo by Jeff Babson*

Two books that Jeff recommends as being useful:

*A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America* by J. Reese Voshell, Jr. Published by McDonald and Woodward.

**RAFFLE PRIZE!**

*Field Guide to Freshwater Invertebrates of North America* by James Thorp and D. Christopher Rogers. Published by Academic Press.

## Aquatic Pot Primer

Spring is the time to pot our aquatic plants. —including those plants that have outgrown their original "homes", as well as the new plants that we all acquire this time of year.

Aquatic containers are meant to be functional —not beautiful. Planting containers generally fall into two categories: plastic and fabric. Let's talk *plastic*, first. There's a whole range of available sizes, from whiskey barrel liners to small pots. There are the *no-holes aquatic "squat" pots* made especially for ponds. These pots are generally wider than they are tall, to better accommodate the horizontal root structure of most aquatic plants. Another advantage is that no planting soil will leak out into the pond, and root systems are better contained. These are available through local commercial pond suppliers, as well as through the web.



The second aquatic pot made specifically for ponds has various shapes and is a plastic mesh structure. The

advantage of this type pot is that it allows roots to reach out for

good water and fertilization circulation around the root system. A great selection of these mesh pots will be available at our upcoming May plant sale.

*Black nursery pots* that most terrestrial plants come in, can easily be recycled for pond use. However, these pots are generally taller and less in circumference than the aquatic squat pots. They can be cut down to accommodate the water depth needed for successful planting. So that planting soil will not leak out, it is advisable to place a barrier in the bottom of the pot, e.g., piece of left over pond vinyl, a coffee filter, newspaper, a plastic sack cut to fit, etc. Screen mesh can also be used, but, as the roots grow around and hide the screen, cuts on the hand can occur at future repotting times —after you have long forgotten about the screen liner.

*Plastic household tubs* from the "dollar/discount" stores do very well as planters, particularly for water lilies, iris, and sedges. They are flatter in shape, allowing rhizomes and root systems to grow freely across the pot. *Plastic concrete mixing troughs* from home improvement stores are great for starting water plants or developing a marginal/bog garden area. However, these troughs, when weighted with wet soil and



*Primer continues on top of page 3.*

Pot Primer Continued

plants, would be nearly impossible to lift out of the bottom of a pond; they are more appropriate for plant shelves or maintained separate from the actual pond.

Clay pots are not appropriate for sinking in the water; they are heavier than their plastic counterparts and deteriorate rapidly when continuously water-soaked. *Fabric pots*, made of porous polypropylene fabric that breathes, allows water to pass through the pot more freely, creating better aeration for the soil. While plant roots will grow straight through the fabric, this type pot is very flexible in sitting on uneven surfaces or being folded down to adjust pot height. However, over time, fabric will deteriorate.

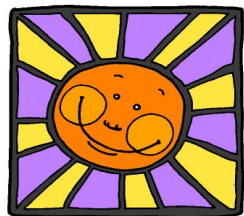
Whatever your pot choice is, a good topper before the potted plant goes back into the pond is *pea gravel* or *sand*. This keeps the soil from floating and discourages fish from tearing up your newly potted plants. And, last, but not least, don't forget to fertilize!

**Membership rates continue at the 2012 level: Household is \$15.00 and Individual is \$10.00.**

**2013 Membership Application is available at:**

<http://tucsonwatergardeners.tripod.com/MembershipApp.pdf>

A 2013 membership means a 20% discount on aquatic plants at our May sale!



## Watergardening Classifieds

**Fertilizer Tabs & Spikes.** It's not too early to be thinking of dividing and fertilizing our aquatic plants. Price is \$7.00 per package for spikes; \$5.00 for tabs. Exact change at the meeting is appreciated. *Stock up!*

**Sell or Trade Watergarden Related Items.** Ad space is FREE to our members. Write-ups on your water garden items must be submitted to the editor by the 4th of each month.



## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Our upcoming May 19th Aquatic Plant Sale at Reid Park is foremost on my mind. As a non-profit organization, this is our only 2013 fundraiser. After expenses, funds are used to cover the club's administrative costs —and, hopefully, dollars remain to be tucked away in our Grant Account. *If you aren't able to attend the April meeting, please email or call me regarding donations of aquatic plants.* We need to have a general idea of our inventory going into this sale. Also, thank you to those that signed our "White Board" as sale volunteers —Plant Wranglers & Cashiers! We could use a few more folks for the 7:00 AM—1:30 PM shift when we are historically at our busiest. *Does it help to say that donuts will be available?*

I would also like to express the club's appreciation to Susie Baker for taking the lead on the task of updating documentation related to our Grant Account and monetary awards. The Board is looking at two avenues related to this program, e.g., Scholarship Application Guidelines, as well as Request For Proposals for watergardening related projects. There will be more specifics in future newsletters.

JoAn

## Your 2013 Board Officers & Directors

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*Spring Bloom—Yellow Flag Iris (Iris pseudacorus)*

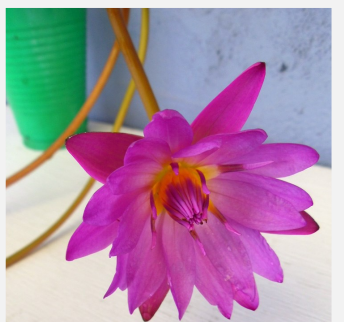
Our web address: <http://tucsonwatergardeners.org/>

## Aquatic Plant Profile



There will be a variety of tropical water lilies at the upcoming May Aquatic Plant Sale, according to the club's Tropical Water Lily "Mom", Casey Case. With an ideal winter environment of heated water tanks, the "Dixie Cup Babies" have been thriving! Even in these small containers, many of the tropicals have developed multiple blooms, with some mature-looking leaves.

"Queen of Siam" was actually introduced from Siam. Its raspberry pink blooms and mottled leaves with purple and maroon make a striking addition to any pond. This excellent day-bloomer is an easy-to-grow tropical water lily for our desert ponds.



*Nymphaea "Queen of Siam"*

Tropical water lilies include a broader spectrum of colors than their hardy water lily counterparts—such as blues, purples, and exotic night bloomers. Their leaves are often more decorative than the hardies with coloration, ruffles, and zig-zagged edges.

*Now is the time to fertilize all of your water lilies for a terrific summer bloom cycle!*