



PONDERINGS

Official Newsletter of The Tucson Watergardeners (TTW)

VOL IX APRIL 2007 No. 3

www.tucsonwatergardeners.org

MAY WATER PLANT SALE!



Mark Your Calendar Now
MAY 6th, Sunday –8:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Members 20% Discount At Sale
Ramada, SW Corner of Reid Park,
Country Club Road & 22nd Street



Greetings From The President!

This is the season for splitting our water plants, and the emphasis of our April program. It is also my only written opportunity to encourage everyone to set their surplus water plants aside and donate them to our May 6th sale. Dropping off your plants between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. the day of the sale would be ideal. This will be our eighth annual water plant sale, and continues to be a tremendous fundraiser for our organization. There will be a sign-up sheet at our April meeting for volunteers to cover the plant sale, specifically,

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Board Meeting: Thursday, April 19th 7:30pm
Host: Wayne Tomczyk

General Meeting: Thursday, April 26th
7:30pm @ Jr League of Tucson
2099 E River Road

Program: "Divide & Conquer Water Plants"
By **Gail Barnhill** (Club Founder)

GAIL NEEDS YOUR HELP!

She needs you to bring plants for her program...specifically, an Iris, Taro, Hardy Lily, and something WAAAAAAY overgrown.
Contact Gail if you have a "candidate."

Who will have the toughest root-bound specimen for Gail to divide and conquer?

Refreshments: Dennis McMacken & Ann Marie Bonito

Door Prizes: Share your "extra" plants & "stuff"

cashiers, "plant wranglers," set-up and clean-up folks are needed. Based on past experience, potted plants can be sold for a bit more, so taking that extra effort to pot your plants for our sale is most appreciated.

I want to thank Eric Cuestas-Thompson for his thought-provoking March program on Feng Shui. We also give a "hats off" to Mary McMacken for being willing to take on 2007 Program Chair responsibilities. If any of our membership has ideas on other speakers and programs for our 2007 season, please let either Mary or me hear from you. Thanks to all for your active participation!

Elizabeth Good



PROFILING MEMBERS PROJECTS

“My goal is to have a successfully working ecosystem,” affirmed Ann Marie Bonito (member) regarding her ponding endeavor. When she and her husband, Paul (member), put their lives together at a new address two years ago, they inherited a grossly neglected pond. In both of their words, “It was disgusting!” After a year of settling in, Ann Marie turned her attention, and plenty of research, to restoring the backyard eyesore.



The result of this labor-of-love is a pristine waterscape settled into their back yard. The pond serves as a personal retreat for this busy couple, complete with comfortable chairs and an umbrella. Bonito has kept her pond as natural as possible, and holds a permit from the state for her school of Gila Topminnows. Among the Anacharis, Parrot Feather, and water lilies swim over fifty goldfish, with names like Zsa Zsa, Crystal, Flash, and Diamonds! A map turtle is a more recent resident.



The Bonito backyard desert pond retreat.

The Bonito water garden also attracts other creatures, including dragonflies (Odonata Anisoptera). Here’s a rare glimpse of a



dragonfly larvae that has just emerged from the Bonito pond, and affixed itself to their cattails for its final molt.

Once free of its casing, the dragonfly’s colors become more vibrant, and it will not return to the pond until ready to mate.

A box of lava rocks and a filter pad serve as filtration for the pond, with its graduated depth of 8-22 inches. The waterfall feature was basically a chunk of cement and rock, complete with an empty beer bottle embedded in the concrete. Ann Marie’s masonry skills fixed that! Today, interesting patterns of rocks, concrete, and water pockets for plantings encase the original waterfall structure.

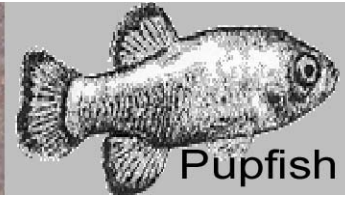


Dwarf bamboo and cannas soften the space between the pond and a concrete wall, and talavera fish provide a splash of color. Bonito’s best advice, “If you inherit a pond and plan to keep it, take it down to nothing. Otherwise, you really won’t know your ecosystem.” A lot of her research was web-based. “*I get it!*” she enthusiastically declares, regarding her ecosystem’s balance.

FACTOID: Water gardening is one of the fastest growing sectors of the gardening industry. - National Gardening Association

**BE GENEROUS AND DONATE PLANTS TO
THE WATERGARDENERS MAY 6th SALE!**

News on Nurturing Natives



Progress is moving to make native fishes and frogs available for water gardens and other urban water features. The state and federal government expect to complete

and sign a Safe Harbor Agreement by this summer that should allow individuals or groups to sign on to monitor and maintain significant captive populations of the Desert Pupfish and Gila Topminnow. With a holding permit from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and a plan, it should also be possible to incorporate native Lowland Leopard Frogs into some of the water features.

A native pond project is underway near Saguaro National Park's east side to ensure that drought and fire don't wipe out the last gene pools of the leopard frogs in the area. And, a few research trial ponds in private yards, combining Topminnows, Longfin Dace, and leopard frogs in midtown and near West Branch are underway. So far, there have been positive results in the compatibility of several native fishes with each other and with the frogs. In February-March 2007, native leopard frogs bred throughout the Tucson Basin floor –for the first time in decades, and all in people's yards and schoolyards.

Learn more about Restoring Arizona's Native Amphibia at <http://members.cox.net/tucsonrana/>

Dr. Philip Rosen, Research Scientist, School of Renewable Natural Resources, University of Arizona is the Guest Contributor for this update. For further information or ideas about native species programs, he has generously offered TTW members his email address at pcrosen@u.arizona.edu Dr. Rosen is also one of the authors of a new book "Amphibians, Reptiles, and their habitats at Sabino Canyon."

This and That....

2007 Future Programs

May: "Pool / Spa To Pond Conversions"
By **Carl Ragel** (Member)
...Circulation strategies, plant shelf styles, aeration, biofiltration, and much more!

June: "How to Make Your Own Fountain Head" By **Elizabeth Good** (TTW President)
...A how-to program to add real drama to your water garden!

Potting Up Pond Plants Three main reasons for dividing aquatic perennials: 1) control the size of the plants; 2) help rejuvenate them; and, 3) increase their number. Here are some suggestions¹:

- ✚ Use a lean potting medium, with unimproved, unscented kitty litter a favorite.
- ✚ Hose off planting medium to better see the rootstock to be divided.
- ✚ Coffee filters can be used to cover drainage holes in black nursery pots.
- ✚ Hardy water lilies grow horizontally, so select a container that is shallow and wide. Plant the rhizome at one edge of the container at a 45° angle, cut edge against the pot, and growing tip exposed.
- ✚ Keep a pail of water or damp paper towels or newspaper handy. Never allow divisions to dry out.

FOR INFO TO GO

2006 Pond Tour Photos Now Available!
www.tucsonwatergardeners.org

¹ The [2007 Club Member Directory & Information Guide](#) has an informative "Potting Up Pond Plants" article written by Gail Barnhill, April's program speaker.

Aquatic Plant Profile

Featuring Plants That Love Our Desert Water Gardens



Variegated Dwarf Common Reed

(*Phragmites australis aurea*)

(Photo courtesy of Gail Barnhill's (member) garden.)

If you're looking for texture and vibrant foliage color in your water gardens this year, this perennial member of the "true grass" family, Poaceae, may be something you want to consider. It's just one of about 10,000 species of grasses classified under the Poaceae family, with "cousins" such as wheat and bamboo.²

The Variegated Dwarf Common Reed is considered a hardy, marginal bog plant. It spreads by rhizomes, and is happy with 2 inches of water over the top of the pot. It grows in both sun and shade, but needs about five hours of sun a day to bloom. This dwarf species can reach a height of 3 to 4 feet. You can cut it back either in the winter or early spring.

Phragmites australis, or Common Reed, non-dwarf type, is considered very invasive and regulated on lists of noxious aquatic wetland plants for specific northern states. However, the dwarf version of this reed is great for our small, contained water gardens in the desert.

² Refer to our web Ponderings Index, VOL VI, No. 6, July 2004, Article #19 "Grasses In & Around Your Pond" for a good list of other Low, Medium and Tall growers.



Watergardening Classifieds

Need Pots for the TTW Plant Sale? Lots of one-gallon nursery pots are available. Great for potting your surplus water plants. *Everything sells better in pots!* Call Elizabeth Good to arrange pick-up.

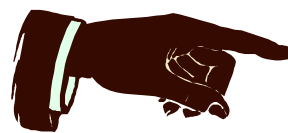
Return of the Fertilizer Spikes! The April TTW general meeting will be a second opportunity to buy fertilizer spikes at \$6.00 per pack. Correct change is appreciated.

Southern Arizona Koi Association is sponsoring its spring tour, May 5th & 6th. For details: <http://www.sakoia.org/>

Attention Watergardeners! Your deadline is the 4th of each month! If you need something or have something you want to sell or trade related to water gardening, this is the place to advertise. Best of all, it's free!

See you at our meeting!

Editor Correction. The March Ponderings stated that you had to have a library card to search the Pima County Public Library on-line resources. Searching the library's web site and general online catalog does not require a library card. However, searching specialized databases will require a library card, as well as conducting transactions, such as reserving and checking out books.



TTW Contacts

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