The Water Garden

The Water Garden is the official publication of the Colorado Water Garden Society (CWGS). Copyright 1999

The CWGS meets monthly, March, April, May, August and September, usually at the Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG). The dates and specific locations of the meetings will be announced in The Water Garden. The 1st Sunday in June, at the Morrison Center at DBG, is a fund-raising event with the sale of tropical and hardy waterlilies, as well as other water plants. This sale is open to the public. The 2nd Sunday in July is reserved for the CWGS members' pond tour and picnic. The 1st Saturday in December is the annual Holiday Party.

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Your comments on the quality, and suggestions for improvement for this newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the editor.

VISIT THE CWGS WEB SITE
http://members.xoom.com/cwgs
See inside for more interesting Web Sites.

ELECTION RESULTS
The result of the elections held at the September 12, 1999 meeting are:

President-Cyndie Thomas
Vice President
Stan Skinger
Secretary
Nancy Jewett
Treasurer
Mike Gibson
Programs
Craig Russell
Members-at-Large
Carla Littlefield
Bob Hoffman

Committees
Membership
Nancy Jewett
DBG May Plant & Book Sale
Ron Bice
CWGS June Plant Sale
Cyndie Thomas
Stan Skinger
Bob Hoffman
July Pond Tour & Picnic

Volunteer Coordinator
Lynn Jewett
Publicity
Nancy Styler
Historian
Lois Mayerchak
Newsletter Editor
Nancy Jewett
Assistant Editor
Pam Maxwell

1999 MEMBERSHIP
Many Garden Centers give discounts to Garden Society members, so remember to show your 1999 membership card when shopping at Garden Centers. See page 7 for membership information.
Reflecting on this last year, as CWGS Vice President, I would like to thank every member for their efforts toward a most successful year. Our membership grew, we had a very successful sale, we saw an increase in participation with volunteer activities and good attendance at meetings.

As we prepare to wind up another season, I would like to express a special “thank you” to the selfless members who:

- spent innumerable hours working at Denver Botanic Gardens assisting with the planting, care and propagation of plants.
- gave time to a very important future resource, the Herbarium project.
- put in innumerable hours to developing each special informative issue of The Water Garden, labeling and mailing them.
- called volunteers to assist with the numerous activities, show and programs.
- planned and arranged interesting and educational programs for everyone.
- opened their ponds for the annual tour and for the efforts in organizing the tour.
- assisted with the annual sale, various shows and those who gave educational presentations on behalf of the organization.
- worked to write and develop the educational brochures on water gardening, to share with members and the general public.

Next issue I will share a preview of what is proposed for our first year in the new millennium.

Cyndie Thomas
President Pro Tem

**EDUCATIONAL BROCHURES**

CWGS members John Mirgon, Mary Mirgon, Cyndie Thomas, Nancy Styler and Stan Skinner have developed a set of nine educational brochures. The titles are “Pond Care, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter”; “Lotus”; “Tropical Lilies”; “Pond Design & Construction”; “Preserving Water Lilies”; “Green Water, The Ecology of the Pond”; “Hardy Lilies”; “Water Plants”; and “Container Water Gardens”. These brochures are available to members at all regular meetings, at no cost. If you are unable to attend meetings, these brochures can be ordered for a cost of $1.50 to cover shipping and handling, from Cyndie Thomas, 1023 S. Kittredge Way, Aurora, CO 80017.

**FALL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

The water garden season is ending both at our homes and at DBG (Denver Botanic Gardens). Now is the time the water plants at DBG are removed from the ponds, split, labeled and stored for next year. CWGS volunteers assist with this project every fall. Volunteers are needed on Sunday mornings, from 8:30am to 12:30pm, to help with the water plants. If you are interested in helping or want more information, call Lynn Jewett @ 303-671-7964.

**A QUICK AND DIRTY EDUCATION**

Nancy Styler
(Reprinted from The Water Garden, September 1992)

How would you like personalized, practical advice on the art and science of water gardening? A hands-on “course” from the experts of the DBG and CWGS can be yours, if you volunteer to help prepare our plants for the winter.

(Continued P. 3)
The Denver Botanic Gardens has an extensive collection of water plants, but its ponds must be drained each winter. This makes it necessary to remove the plants, but allows us to care for them by dividing, cataloging, and storing them for the winter months. We do this with a team of volunteers from members of CWGS who work week-end mornings (and sometime afternoons) in September and October. Joe Tomocik sets the exact dates based on how the season goes. We reverse the process each spring (usually around May), when the ponds are refilled as we remove the plants from storage and put them up for the new season. There are a number of different jobs to be done—from hefting pots to writing labels. All volunteers, regardless of knowledge level or physical capacity are welcome and needed.

When my first pond was built, I knew little or nothing about water gardening. I had my first plants, but no idea how to care for them. A friend recommended that I join the CWGS, and at my first meeting they asked for volunteers. Thinking I might learn something, I volunteered and my education began. In a few weeks-ends of pleasant (though muddy) company, I learned more than I could have imagined. Our group included several international experts on our hobby, though you would never know it by their unassuming manner. As I worked alongside them, listening to their observations and advice, I was quickly made to feel welcome, part of the group. I learned so much, so fast, from the basics to fairly subtle pointers that simply are not available in any books. Beyond that, I had a good time and met a lot of great people! Quite simply, it’s the best way I know to have fun and learn about our incredible collection at the DBG. An experience this valuable usually costs tuition, but you can participate for FREE! Call Lynn Jewett @ 303 671-7964 to volunteer, or for more information.

WINTERING OVER TROPICAL MARGINAL PLANTS
Cyndie Thomas

Many water plants are perennial plants, meaning they will endure for a number of years, going dormant during the fall and winter seasons and returning the following Spring season. There are also a number of perennial plants that are not winter hardy in our region, due to our temperature extremes. These are often referred to as tropicals.

Tropicals can be treated as annual plants and replaced each year, or many can be overwintered as a house plant, over the Fall and Winter Seasons. Prime candidates for this activity are cannas, blue bell (Ruellia), Gymnocoronis, Umbrella Palm (Cyprus), Papyrus and Hibiscus.

Plants should be brought in around mid-September, well prior to the first freeze. (Ed. Even though we have had our first freeze, you can still bring the plants indoors. You will lose some foliage, but can save the plant if the roots have not frozen.) Before you bring them into the house, inspect for insects. Most insects can be dislodged with a hard spray of water. Bring in and place near a bright sunny window. Remember not to place directly in front of a south or west window, as this could cause leaf burn. Use an old dish pan or any container that will hold water, to set the potted plant in, and keep a sufficient level of water to maintain the plant. They do not need to be submerged in the water, as they were in the pond, just keep them feet wet constantly.

It is a good idea to hang a few sticky fly strips near plants to catch annoying gnats and other flying insects looking for a place to live. It is important to watch for any insect increase which may arise, and treat promptly before it gets out of control. White flies and mealy bugs are among the worst to control, if you let populations increase.

You will not fertilize again until next Spring when you return the plant to the pond. At that time you may also wish to prune and/or re-pot the plant.

Another method used to over winter many tropical water plants is to take cuttings. Asclepias, Ruellia, Gymnocoronis and Hibiscus are ones easily propagated in this manner. Cuttings can be placed in water, in bright light. Add water as needed and fully change if it develops an odor. When a good root system emerges at the jointed places on the plants, you can then pot them and maintain by placing in containers which hold water, as discussed above.

WINTERING OVER CANNAS
Nancy Jewett

Cannas can be over wintered, in their pots, by bringing them in the house and treating them as house plants, keeping their “feet” wet. My experience is they become very “leggy” with weak foliage by spring, and have to be cut back. It then takes them a long time to start growing again outside. I have been most successful with the following care. I cut the tops off right below the lowest leaf, wash the soil off, and split the rhizomes. After tagging each individual rhizome, I place them in a bucket or other tall container of water, and set them in a sunny window. In May, I repot them, and have them ready to go outside after the last frost. The new foliage is much stronger, and is able to withstand the change in environment, from indoors to outdoors.
PREPARING YOUR POND FOR WINTER

Nancy Jewett

(Some of the information for this article is from the CWGS educational brochures “Pond Care, Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter”; “Hardy Lilies”; “Tropical Lilies”) You will need to begin the pond care before the leaves start falling, as you want the project completed before covering your pond with a net. Covering your pond with bird netting will save a lot of work, if you have trees near by your pond. When you cover your pond, use poles or other objects to keep the net above the water. If the net is on the water, it will sink into the water with the weight of the leaves, and snow and be very difficult to work with.

Fall is the ideal time to clean your pond. If you do it while the fish are still active, they are not likely to suffer any ill effects, and will have a healthier winter environment. Some experts recommend removing up to 50% of the water, using a pump or a pool vacuum to remove water and debris from the bottom. If you do this, don’t forget to add the dechlorinator and chloramine remover. It is also a good time to split and repot your hardy waterlilies. Waterlilies that are split in the fall start growing earlier than the ones that are split in the spring, and the water is usually warmer, making it a more comfortable project.

When water temperatures drop below 55 degrees, stop feeding fish and shut down the biological filter. Drain all water from any exterior piping to eliminate cracking or freezing from the eventual freezing. You keep an area open for exchange of gasses in a pond with fish. Run a small submersible pump all winter. Place the pump on a brick or pot with the outlet approximately 2” below the water surface. A tank aerator (available for stock tanks) also works. Place air outlets 6”-8” below the water surface. If extremely cold temperatures cause the pond to completely freeze over, place a pan of boiling water on the surface to melt a hole in the ice. Do not try to break the ice, as the concussion can kill fish. Check your water level often and add water as needed to replace any that has been lost. Add water slowly to avoid rapid temperature changes, and use a dechlorinator and chloramine remover at the rate specified, if you add more than one inch of water. If waterfall features are left running during the winter (not generally a good idea), it is important to visually inspect the pond water level to ensure winter freezes and thaws have not created a water leak.

Tropical water plants in and around the pond will either have to go inside, or be disposed of (see the articles on tropical marginals and cannaas).

You can attempt to save your tropical waterlilies. Allow the plant to stay in the pond until it stops producing flowers and leaves. This usually occurs in late September or early October. Take the lily out of the pond, and allow it to drain for a day, in a shaded area. Remove all dead and weak leaves, leaving only the smallest and firmest leaves. Place the pot in a plastic bag which should be folded over loosely. Store in a cool location (55 degrees is ideal). Check the soil to be sure it remains moist. In January, break open the soil ball and remove the tuber which has hopefully formed. Clean the tuber carefully, and put it in a zip-lock bag with some water. Store in a dark, cool location (55 degrees). Check occasionally, rinsing and changing the water. In late March or early April, float the tuber, in the bag, in a container of water with a temperature of 75-80 degrees. When the tuber just begins to sprout, place it in a small pot (3” is fine), with a rich soil, and add light to the formula. You will want 4”-8” of water over the pot for the lily to grow properly. Allow the plant to grow until the leaves are 1-1/4” to 1-1/2” in diameter. Gently rinse the soil away and separate the small plants from the tuber, carefully retaining as many of the roots as possible. Repot the tuber for more plants. Place the plants in 4” or larger pots and grow them until a number of roots begin to leave the pot. Continue to repot as necessary until the pond warms up, usually the 1st or 2nd week of June.

To prepare your hardy waterlilies and lotus for winter, remove dead and dying foliage, leaving any new starting foliage. Lower the pots to the bottom of the pond, so the rhizomes do not freeze. If you pond freezes solid, or is drained, you will need to remove the lilies. You can store the entire pot (if kept moist and cool) in a plastic bag, or remove the rhizome and store it in moist peat moss at 40-50 degrees.

Most hardy marginals and bog plants can be wintered over in the same spot they have been growing all summer. It is best not to cut back the foliage on the hardy plants. Some of them (especially cattails) will die out if cut below the water level, and the water freezes.

Last, check to see if there is anything in the way of the shovel, when you have to clean the snow from the surface of the ice. You should remove the snow from the surface, so that sunlight can get to the plants underneath (luckily our snow usually melts before we have to do this). If sunlight cannot get through is results in dead plants, dead fish and a smelly spring mess.
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT DURING THE WINTER

PLANT RESCUE
Adapted from the Wild Ones-Natural Landscapers, Ltd. (www.for-wild.org) and printed in Habitats, Summer, 1999 the National Wildlife Federation Newsletter.

We all know that digging plants from the wild is not a sustainable or acceptable way to promote their use. To propagate plants from seeds, or to rescue them from a site that is being destroyed for ‘development’ is a great way to promote the genetic diversity of plants in your neighborhood.

Basic procedures for plant rescues:

* Find an appropriate site. Write to landowners or developers explaining your mission and encouraging natural landscaping. Ask permission to rescue plants.

* Engage other like-minded individuals in a “dig committee”.

* Conduct a survey of the site with the landowner and the dig committee. Note the following: species of plants and plant communities; the number of people the site will accommodate; soil type and conditions (dry, sandy, rocky); exposure (sun, shade, wind); safety issues; and property boundaries. After the survey, prepare a simple map showing boundaries and hazards. If time allows, mark individual plants that you intend to rescue.

* Recruit assistance. Notify friends, neighbors, and local native plant enthusiasts of your plans. Pick a day for the dig, let people know when to arrive, what to bring and wear.

* Prepare the necessary equipment. This should include sun screen, insect repellent, drinking water, snacks, sharp shovels, pruning shears, collapsible saw, plastic totes or laundry baskets, comfortable rope for hauling, marking pens, plastic bags, plastic pots or boxes for temporary holding, and an old shower curtain or tarp for covering plants to prevent wind damage in transport. Mark your tools with visible paint so that you may recover them at the end of the dig.

* On dig day review safety rules and property boundaries, and ask that those knowledgeable about plants assist other with identification. For best results, keep plants cool and moist, and replant as soon as possible.

BACKYARD WILDLIFE HABITAT

Information obtained from the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program - The National Wildlife Federation. More information can be obtained at www.nwff.org/habitats. Information is also available at that site on how to apply for certification of your backyard habitat. You can also call 1 (703) 790-4434 for more information.

Wildlife requires food, water, protective cover and areas to raise their young. You need to take into consideration the type of wildlife you want to attract, and their specific needs.

FOOD

Plant vegetation that will provide food throughout the year. Consider trees and plants that provide acorns, nuts, berries, buds, catkins, fruit, nectar and seeds. Contact bird stores, garden centers or nature centers for information about the best type of trees and other plants in your area. In the winter, you will probably need to supplement natural food sources with different types of bird feed. Consider the type of wildlife you are trying to attract when picking the types of seed. Example: If you don’t want squirrels and/or pigeons, don’t put out corn. In summer you can provide sugar water to attract hummingbirds. Remember to use plain sugar water - no red dye.

WATER

Wildlife needs drinking and bathing water. Birds seem to really like to splash and bathe in waterfalls, but they also enjoy the edges of ponds, bird baths, and even a shallow dish of water. The source of water should be available all year, so if you shut down some of your water features in the winter, think about how you are going to continue providing water.

COVER

“Wildlife needs protective cover just as people need the shelter of a house.” The trees and plants that you provide can serve as shelter, as well as food. Some examples of things that provide shelter are dense shrubs, hollow logs, evergreens and tall grass. “The ideal wildlife habitat area will include plants ranging widely in size and density, from small evergreen shrubs to tall, full-grown trees, so that birds and other animals can choose the appropriate cover that they need for feeding, hiding, counting, and nesting activities.
ANY LOTUS LEAVES LEFT? TRY THIS!

FRYED RICE IN LOTUS LEAVES
From The Water Garden, June 1994

2 Fresh Lotus Leave (or 2 dried leaves—see note)
1/2 C frozen tender peas
1 T canola or corn oil
2 eggs
3 C plain, chilled, cooked rice
2 oz. boiled ham (optional)
2 stalks of scallion
1 C chicken stock
1 t salt

Preparation:
1. Separate rice grains
2. Lightly scramble eggs and break into chunks
3. Dice ham into 1/4" cubes
4. Wash and finely chop scallions
5. Quickly defrost frozen peas by running warm water through them; drain well

To Cook:
1. Heat wok over high heat; pour in 1 T oil; swirl it around and heat for 30 seconds. Add rice and stir-fry for 1 to 3 minutes until rice grains are heated evenly. Pour in chicken stock; continue stirring until liquid is mostly absorbed. Add ham, scallions, peas, and eggs; add salt to taste; continue stirring until rice is completely dry.
2. Wrap fried rice with two layers of lotus leaves; use toothpicks to hold leaf folds in place.
3. Place rice bundles in a bowl and steam in a covered pot for 15 minutes over high heat.
4. Roll lotus leaves back from rice and serve. The leaf itself is not eaten.

Fresh lotus leaves have a wonderfully delicate aroma when steamed. Besides adding flavor, the essence of lotus leaves is believed to help cleanse and purify blood.

NOTE: Dried lotus leaves are used by first softening them for 2 minutes in boiling water.

The Colorado Water Garden Society has its own Web Page at http://members.xoom.com/ewgs/

The site has information on the organization, meeting dates, articles on water gardening, plant descriptions and photos, and a discussion list. Anyone interested in joining the discussion list on water gardening can do it through accessing the page. Ask questions, or share your successes.

INTERESTING WEB SITES

The Commercial Web Sites are not meant to be endorsements, but are listed because they have interesting information and links.

WATER GARDEN SOCIETIES

International Water Garden & Waterlily Society
www.iwgs.org/index.htm
Victoria Conservancy
http://members.xoom.com/victoria_spflin dex.html

WATER GARDEN INFORMATION & FUN SITES

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/habitats
Butterflies of North America
Garden Pond Forum
www.watergardening.com/forum.html
Internet Pond Society
w3.one.net/~rzutti/index.html
Water Lily Cottage
www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/7025/
Flower Photos
www.kumagaya.or.jp/~shintari/flowerq.htm
Botany Encyclopedia & Dictionary
www.botany.com/index.html
Water Garden Supplies
www.gardenponds.com/

Send your favorite garden related Web Sites to the editor.