



January Meeting

Bluebonnet Swamp

January 27, 2002
2:30 pm

The Water Spout

Capital Area Pond & Water Gardening Society Newsletter

January, 2002

Capital Area Pond & Water Gardening Society, Founded June 1993

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Meeting Dates for 2002

January 27, 2002

February 24, 2002

March 23, 2002

April 21, 2002

May 26, 2002

June 23, 2002

July 28, 2002

August 25, 2002

September 22, 2002

October 27, 2002

December 1, 2002 (Christmas Party)
Keep these dates in mind and plan to attend the meetings. The Society can only get better if everyone participates, so get involved. Locations will be in the monthly Newsletter.

Happy New Year!!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and everything is going well. Well, we're off to a new year of water gardening and I hope you are all ready for the upcoming year of events.

So far some of the topics that will be discussed at monthly meeting include daylilies and camellias around the pond, a discussion on herb plants and effective uses of herbs around the pond. We will participate again in the Earth Day Celebration and have a pond cleanup/social at Westdale Elementary in March.

We will kick off the New Year with the first meeting that will take place at the Bluebonnet Swamp. Ms Claire Coco and her associates will give us a tour of the facility. They will also show off their special garden that is design to attract birds. This will be a complete tour of the facility, which includes a walking tour of the swamp. We will first have a short club meeting and then the tour will begin. So be ready for a good time!

Featured Article

Five Easy Steps for the Perfect Spring Pond

By Sue Speichert

Original publication date: March/April 2000
Water Gardening Magazine
www.watergardening.com

No matter where we live, there's always a day or two in spring that are unusually warm and sunny, like the summer days that are just around the corner. Take advantage of those balmy spring days to get your pond into tip-top shape for summer. Take the time now to find and solve those pond problems, before disaster strikes. This summer, you'll be glad you did.

1. Check the Pond

First, take a critical look at your pond to see if something's out of place. Inspect your pond edges and take a close look at the water level. Make sure the pond is staying as full as it should. You never know where a small leak or spill can occur. If you've turned off your stream or waterfall for the winter, turn it on and check that everything's all right. A rock might have fallen out of place, or the soil might have settled in along a bog edge.

Clean up all fallen leaves in and around the pond. Use a vacuum to remove any organic debris on the bottom of the pond. We've decided that it's easier to just drain the pond and clean it if there's more than a half-inch of bottom sludge. You'll have to set up a holding tank for your fish, but it's worth the extra effort.

That muck in the pond bottom can harbor and grow many different kinds organisms that can harm the fish and pollute the water. These organisms respond to warming temperatures very quickly and can easily cause diseases and illness in your fish in the spring. The organic matter at the bottom of the pond also acts like a fertilizer to feed algae blooms once the weather and the water starts to warm. Save yourself a lot of agony and headaches later-clean the sludge out of the pond now, before it has a chance to work its summer mischief.

2. Check your Pump and Filter System

Take out your pump and make sure that it's clean and that it's working properly. Look for any cracks in the housing. Make sure the impellers run freely, without being blocked by dead snails or debris. It's amazing how much stuff can find its way into your pump, even when there hasn't been any activity in your pond. You'll be a lot less tense looking for spare or replacement parts now than you will be

in the middle of summer when the pond has run dry, the temperature has soared to record levels, and your fish are in a make-shift holding tank in the garage or basement.

Check your filtration system and clean your filter media. If the filter material looks worn or dirty and if it doesn't clean up well then replace it with new media. Invest a few dollars now to improve your filter system. It will save you many more dollars this summer when the system will be hard at work combating algae and keeping your water crystal clear and free of ammonia and other harmful chemicals.

Add new beneficial bacteria to your pond. It may not do much when the water temperature is below 50 F. Just the same, it will be there ready to go into action as soon as the water warms. It's especially important to seed your filters with beneficial bacteria early in the spring. Algae begins to grow as soon as the water temperature in the pond rises. Don't wait until your water is green with algae-it will be too hard for your bacteria to catch up. If you use barley straw, add some new straw now so that it will be properly cured for summer. Leave the old barley in the pond for a few weeks or so until the new barley has a chance to begin working.

3. Check the Water Quality

Use a reliable test kit to check your water quality for ammonia, nitrite and nitrate. If you don't have a good test kit, by all means get one. It is a great investment and will spare you from worry and grief throughout the summer. If your readings are not in the proper range, you'll know about it right away and can take the necessary steps now, before your system is completely overwhelmed.

4. Check the Fish

Spring is a very stressful time of year for our pond fish. The water temperatures fluctuate considerably from day to night and from one day to another. The fishes' immune systems may not be up to the task. They have gone for several weeks or months without much food. Their hormones are starting to wake up and they are approaching the annual spring spawn.

Make sure your fish are ready for spring. Check them for any external signs of disease or injury. If they are not healthy, treat them and consider moving them to a quarantine tank until they have recovered. Remove sharp objects such as bricks or cinder blocks from the pond so that the fish do not scratch themselves during spawning.

Some pond-keepers add a small amount of salt to the pond or do a salt dip to give the fish a jump-start toward summer. Specially formulated chemical treatments for the water, such as Koi Vital, also help pond fish make the transition from winter to summer more easily.

When you should start feeding your fish in the spring depends in large part upon your climate. If the water has been cold and frozen, it's best to wait until the water temperature is consistently above 50 F or 55 F for a few days before you begin to feed the fish. Feed them low protein food, and don't over-feed them. They will enjoy natural foods, too, such as peas, lettuce, or even duckweed. Make sure the food is high in Vitamin C and other nutrients. The fish especially need very nutritious food this time of year.

5. Check the Plants

Water plants that have overwintered in the pond are starting to wake up for spring. Remove dead leaves from the plants, since the spent foliage will simply decay in the water and become fodder for

an algae bloom as well as harboring pests and diseases.

If you moved your lilies, lotus or marginal plants to the deepest part of the pond to hibernate during the winter, move them up now so that they are closer to the water surface. The spring sun will warm the upper layers of the water first, and the lilies and lotus will start to sprout and grow. This is especially important for plants that don't like to be submerged, such as water forget me not and parrot feather.

Some plants are best transplanted very early in the spring. Iris are often transplanted before they have put out much growth, so that they won't be disturbed as they set flower and bloom. So, too, with lotus, which are best transplanted before they have started to sprout and grow. Most plants, though, can wait to be moved to bigger pots once it's warmer outside. This is easier on the plants, and easier on you too. At least it's a lot warmer.

Hardy waterlilies and most marginal water plants may be transplanted when they are actively growing. Spring is the time of year to fertilize plants that are growing early, such as marsh marigold and sweet flag. Wait until the water reaches 65 F before fertilizing waterlilies and lotus. They won't use the food anyway, and the fertilizer may begin to break down prematurely, leaching into the pond and contributing to an algae bloom.

Spring is the ideal time of year to clean and prep your pond for the warm summer months ahead. Check your pond for leaks. Clean up debris in and around your pond. Make sure your pump and filter system are working properly and replace used or worn parts, equipment, or supplies. Look at your fish closely, and give them the good food and good water quality they'll need to make the

adjustment from spring through fall. Check your plants, too, moving them to shallower water where they'll get more of the warm spring sun.

Take care of potential problems now, before they have a chance to overtake you and your pond. Make this the summer to remember your pond because of all the fun, relaxation and enjoyment it gave you and your family.

Internet Interests

<http://www.koivet.com/>

Info on disease topics for aquatic animals

<http://www.pondkeeper.com/>

Pondkeeper Magazine

<http://www.watergardening.com/>

Water Gardening Magazine

******If you know of any interesting web pages that will benefit other society members, please let me know and I will post them in this section. Thanks.**

Happy reading.

**Lance Beecher
Newsletter Editor**

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