



# The Water Spout

**Capital Area Pond & Water Gardening Society Newsletter**  
July , 2005

Capital Area Pond & Water Gardening Society, Founded June 1993  
Best website on the web... [www.capwgs.org](http://www.capwgs.org) ... go there!

## JULY MEETING

When: Sunday, July 24

Time: 2:30 PM

Place: Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center  
10503 N. Oak Hills Parkway

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Capital Area Pond and Water Gardening Society  
Minutes for the June 2005 Meeting

The June meeting was held at the home of Alan and Mary Beth Guidry on Sunday, June 26, 2005.

Margaret welcomed everyone and thanked Mary Beth for providing her home for our meeting.

The membership voted and approved the changing of our club name to the Deep South Koi and Pond Society. This change will support us in regional activities and an anticipated alliance with the Associated Koi Clubs of America. Bridget will make the changes on our website.

Our next meeting is planned to be held in the Bluebonnet Swamp meeting room, Sunday, July 24, 2005 at 2:30 PM.

Danna announced that the Orchid Society Show is being held July 9 & 10, 2005.

BREC contacted Margaret telling her they are ready to purchase equipment to update the pond at the Botanic Garden at Independence Park. The equipment installed now has not been working properly for some time. We have given our input on the equipment and will support the installation with the expertise of our members.

Mary Beth told us about installing her new pond. She used two preformed ponds and connected them together so that the water flowed from one pond into the other via a small water fall. She did have a problem connecting them since she had to cut a notch in one of the ponds. She also had difficulty finding the source of a leak between the two ponds. When all of the installation problems were solved, flagstone was placed around the edge as well as different types of flowers and small shrubs adding the perfect finishing touch.

Mary Beth also told us about the beautiful renovations they had made to their home. We all had questions for her on those.

We then enjoyed and delicious birthday cake celebrating our 12 years.

Member News:

Congratulations to Lance and Paula on the birth of their new baby girl, Caroline Elizabeth, on June 10, 2005. We can't wait to see her!

Best wishes to Sandi Bordelon who is recovering from surgery! Hopefully she will be back in the swing of things soon.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Klenke for Sandi Bordelon, Secretary

## Article

### Emergency Preparedness - by Doc Johnson

Should a Koi Keeper have an emergency plan?

A Koi keeper *should* have an emergency plan. However, the hobbyist will never *need* the emergency plan because emergencies do not happen until the hobbyists leave town, even for the weekend.

Welcome to the world of Koi keeping.

This brings up the important point that Emergency plans should be written with the layman (your house sitter) in mind, simple, clear instructions which intend to be as comprehensive as possible, and as free of "jargon" as possible.

What should the Emergency Plan consist of?

First, it should attempt to anticipate all possible short term catastrophes, including pH sags, power outtages, filter or pump failures, and fish illnesses. They should be alphabetized, and should refer to parts, medicines, or additives which you have laid in before your departure.

The most common short term crisis is pH crash. You should have a pH kit, an alkalinity test kit, and some Arm and Hammer Baking Soda on hand for this emergency which will happen sooner or later.

Another common crisis is a power outage. A back up generator is 300-400 dollars and is wonderful in winter or the hot summer months to maintain circulation and aeration in the pond. Especially important in summer when the water is warm, fish will not live without surface agitation.

Other crises can be anticipated such as fish jumping out of the pond, what to do if the fish get sick, what to do with a malignant water leak, what to do if a pump fails.

Can you protect your koi from emergencies such as flood, quakes, and massive power failures?

Sure! Floods are preventable to a point by constructing the pond with a "lip" above grade. A simple elevation of the liner and rock ledge over grade will prevent a small flash flood from erasing the pond and it's residence. Larger floods are not as preventable. If you see furniture floating by, don't worry about the fish, they are already wet. Get your butt to safety.

Power failures are simple to prevent, by employing various devices to alert you if power fails. There are battery powered units, available from Bubbles of Life, which call and page you when the power fails. Then you can automatically, or manually start a battery backup or a gas generator.

Earthquakes are usually no problem for the average hobbyist, unless the pond is indoors, unlined and made of concrete, or under some material which could fall into the pond. By and large, the seismic disruption in California is the most significant and these have not killed too many fish.

How should a koi keeper start planning for emergency preparedness?

In general, I think a koi keeper with a valuable collection would have the following materials on hand for emergencies:

- A collapsible tank of substantial size, in case the entire pond were suddenly "unlivable" or corrupted.
- Dechlorinator and hosing on hand for a massive water change in case the derangement was

limited to the water itself. You should be able to change 100% of the pond water at any time, on short notice. This is true especially when the neighbors problem-child with unmedicated impulse control disorders lobs some chlorine tablets into your pond.

- A spare pump is important, in case either the main filter pump, or the pond aerator and circulator pump were corrupted. If your spare pump could at least temporarily supply a filtration or aeration device, then one pump could intercept both eventualities.
- Salt is good to have around in case of sudden illness. There are not many illnesses which would not at least initially be improved by a major water change followed by salt at 0.3 percent. This equates roughly to three pounds of salt per one hundred US gallons.
- pH test kits and some Baking Soda are good to stockpile for pH crises. This was discussed before.

Past that, you can't stock a *warehouse*. There are limits to preparedness defined by practicality.

So, a tank, a pump, a pH kit and some spare Baking Soda, and some dechlor plus salt should see you through most foreseeable disasters.

What chemical products should you have on hand for dealing with biofilter failure?

In the event of the failure of the biofilter, which is *unlikely*, the most important thing is to suspend feeding. Feeding fish produces wastes which are the domain of the biofilter. So if the biofilter were to fail you, you would need to provide circulation of the water and reduce feedings until the biofilter could be reinstated. Partial water changes to control ammonia nitrogen accumulation will do well in the interim..

Is there anything you can do to keep your biofilter alive?

If the biofilter failed, was cracked or in some way damaged, the media that is inside the biofilter will sustain life better if kept OUT of water, for example wet, in a plastic bag. Rather than sealed under water. Under water, the beneficial bacteria of the biofilter media would consume all the oxygen and destroy itself. In a plastic bag, under refrigeration, a biological media such as sponge or matting can be viably colonized for months. This was proven by Dr. John Gratzek storing bio media in plastic bags under a porch for a whole winter's time and then resurrecting it in the Spring. Freezing, however, will kill these beneficial bacteria at once.

This story was prompted by the "Blackout of 2003" which happened on August 14. With power out for nearly 5 days in some areas, how does a koi keeper deal with the situation?

I saw that on TV in several states in August. The problem with a summertime power failure or other natural disaster is that the fishes' water is warm, and carries very little dissolved oxygen. This is *\*bad\** because when the power is out, aeration is all but impossible. Under these circumstances, if you didn't have a power generator, (gas powered) then you're fish could be "goners".

I maintain a Coleman generator, which can carry the entirety of my filtration and water pumping system - I bought this generator for \$300 - and it's been called into service three times since I bought it. Three times that my fish would have died without the ability to maintain their circulation and aeration during extended power failures.

In the event of a severe storm, wash out or flash flooding can erode away soil creating serious problems for liner ponds, perhaps even concrete ponds, putting enough stress on them to cause collapse. How can you deal with that situation?

Pond collapse is comparatively rare. In fact, I've heard of three total in all these many years. However, I guess I am in the wrong geography for this to be common. You hear of mudslides all the time on the West Coast and I feel that if that's possible, an above ground pond would be recommended. I am aware that in some cases, freight trucks can be slammed into oblivion by mudslides so sometimes, no

pond is safe. However, strong above-ground ponds can be constructed with 6x6 landscape ties and corner poles which can almost float.

What about leaks? What should a koi keeper do in the event of a serious leak that drains the pond significantly over night?

In those cases, those are the times you'd be glad to have a collapsible tank to set up, and move the fish to safety. All you'd need is some garage space, the collapsible tank, and a net cover. Set up the tank, remove the fish from the leaking pond, and then net cover the tank. Always dechlorinate. When repairing a leak, the leak area needs to be quite completely dry, so "leaving the fish in" during the repair is impracticable.

Let's just say for simplicity's sake the our koi keepers have ponds at least 3,000 gallons in size. That's a lot of water. What types of containers should they be prepared to have in the event their fish need to be moved quickly?

If the pond was even 6000 gallons, they would not wisely have more than 600 inches of fish, and in fact would be truly well-served to have a mere 300 inches of fish. This amount of fish could EASILY be carried through a crisis in a 600 gallon holding tank for a week.

Against some emergencies, koi probably don't stand a chance. What types of emergencies do you think fall into this category?

Since we can always off load the fish to safety in a holding tank, there's hardly ever a hopeless emergency.

We've heard stories of koi being washed out of their ponds and still being saved. How little water can a koi survive in? I do mean survive, long enough to be rescued...

Great question, and I have answers. We saw a pond that was blown out by a failed silt fence. Thousands of gallons of silt-water ran down the hill through the pond, dislocating everyone (Koi) into the local landscape. Any fish in a shallow puddle was alive the next day. Good case which illustrates that temperature and humidity have a lot to do with survival. A fish that leaps from the pond into wet leaves on a cold, cloudy day can live 24 hours. (It happened at my house.) The same fish jumping out of the pond in Arizona on a cloudless, one-hundred-degree day is a goner in minutes.

You can have high hopes, in a flood plain situation that the fish (some fish) may be in small "tidepools" and may still be viable quite a few hours later. So don't be hopeless.

Thanks, Dr. Erik Johnson

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A Few of My Best Sites:

- [jvsvet.com](http://jvsvet.com) - My animal hospital site.
- [koivet.com](http://koivet.com) - My Koi health site.
- [pondrx.com](http://pondrx.com) - My fish medicines site.
- [fishdoc.net](http://fishdoc.net) - My fish FAQs site.
- [koilab.com](http://koilab.com) - My fish research site.
- [koi-news.com](http://koi-news.com) - My koi news site.
- [koiclassifieds.com](http://koiclassifieds.com) - Classified ads for, and by hobbyists!

## Internet Interests...

**Best Website on the web. GO THERE!**  
Capital Area Pond & Water Gardening Society  
<http://www.capwgs.org/>

Here are a few of our members favorites...

- Pond keeper Magazine <http://www.pondkeeper.com>
- Water Gardening Magazine Info on disease topics for aquatic animals <http://www.koivet.com>
- National Pond Society <http://www.bandd.net/nps/index.htm>
- Austin Pond Society <http://www.austinpondsociety.org/>
- Stokes Tropicals in New Iberia <http://www.stokestropicals.com/>
- Rare and Exotic Seeds <http://www.seedman.com>
- Big Cat Sanctuary <http://www.yogieandfriends.org>
- Miami Valley Water Garden Society Web Page <http://www.mvwgs.org>
- Pond Pals Tour <http://members.aol.com/marylady/pondpals/pindex.htm>
- Water Gardening Magazine <http://www.watergardening.com>
- Master Garden Products <http://www.mastergardenproducts.com/watergar.htm>
- <http://www.ponddoc.com/>
- [www.gardenlink.com](http://www.gardenlink.com)
- St. Joseph Water Garden Society: [www.sjwatergarden.com](http://www.sjwatergarden.com)

Go to the CAPWGS website for more favorites. If you have a favorite that will benefit other society members, please let us know. Thanks!

To purchase a business card ad space, contact Bridget Hayes 225-275-4698 or [lilypads@capwgs.org](mailto:lilypads@capwgs.org)

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**Note from the Editor:** I look forward to serving as your Newsletter editor for this year. Your ideas or any information you would like to add to the newsletter are always welcome. Please contact me at 225 755 2449 or email me at [betty@lakeshoregroup.com](mailto:betty@lakeshoregroup.com).