



Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club Newsletter

Volume 14 Issue 06

June 2010

Floating Islands – Where function and beauty team up!



Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club Newsletter

“News From Norm”

Important: There will be no club meeting on June 4th. Plan on attending the Club's Plant Auction held at Lilyfest at Bergen Watergarden on Sunday June 6th at 1:00 PM. □

May Meeting

Bob Wheeler informed us about "White Lists and Black Lists: Potential Impact of Invasive Plant and Animal Control." As Texas plans to change its lists and Florida seems poised to follow, we need to understand the issues and be aware of the implications for the future of New York.

Black Lists identify species that may NOT be purchased or owned depending on the way the list is written. Any specie not on the list is allowed. The advantage of a Black List is that it can list known invasive plants and animals. The disadvantage is that it can take a very long time to add a new invasive specie to the list, which can give it a big foothold.

White Lists identify the only species that may be purchased or owned. If a specie is not on the list, it may not be purchased or owned. The advantage of the White List is that all plants and animals that are not on list are considered to be an invasive. The disadvantage is that the list can be very long and take a long time to create.

The Texas Legislature is ending its long-standing policy of keeping a Black List, and is replacing it with a White List of

approved plants that can be sold. The very short new White List is made up almost exclusively of plants that are native to Texas.

Bob talked about some of the problems in New York, such as: Dutch Elm Disease, and Purple Loosestrife. He suggested six easy and important ways you can help stop invasives. His list is posted on the GVPAKC website. Check it out and help make a difference! □

Newsletter via email Option

Several people have expressed an interest in receiving the club Newsletter by email. Some people like to eliminate the extra paper in their household, some prefer to file their old newsletters on their PC and some would like to see all pages (with more color photos) in color on their PC monitor. The electronic version also allows the club to save money on copying and postage, which is a significant part of our club's annual expense. If you would like to receive your newsletter via email, please send your email address to: newsletter@gvpakc.org, or call Norm James at 334-3536. You can send more than one address if you use multiple email addresses. Rest assured that this is an optional choice on your part. If you take no action, your newsletter will continue to be copied and mailed to you in hardcopy format. However if you wish to help the club reduce costs and receive your newsletter via email, just let us know. We appreciate your time in consideration of this option. □



Spring Start-Up

In springtime, the plants in your pond will begin to peek above the surface of the water, and your fish will become more active, signaling that it is time to start getting your pond ready for another beautiful summer season.

First, remember that ponds should reach a temperature of 48 degrees or above before being disturbed.

If you have used a net over the winter, now is the time to remove the netting.

Dead leaves and other organic debris, as well as any significant accumulation of sludge, should be removed from the bottom using a skimmer net or a pond vacuum. I use an oval net that seems to work best for leaves and other coarse debris.

Garden ponds are special environments that take time to develop. It takes several seasons to achieve a balanced ecosystem. Therefore, you should not completely drain and scrub down your pond every year.

A complete draining of the pond must be avoided whenever possible, but a partial drain is desirable to dilute the minerals and pollutants, which may have accumulated due to the constant evaporation of water during the past year. Draining 1/3 of the water and replacing it with fresh water accomplishes this goal without disturbing the habitat of fish, frogs, and other pond life too much. Caution: A de-chlorinator must be added when re-filling the pond with tap water to avoid

Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club Newsletter

killing the pond inhabitants.

A special note about re-filling ponds, which are home to koi: Koi are extremely sensitive to sudden temperature changes. Filling the pond must be done slowly and carefully if the temperature of the water coming out of the tap differs greatly from the water of the pond. A temperature change that is too sudden can send the koi into shock or even kill them. A thermometer to measure the water temperature is very important.

Pond water should be tested and adjusted in the spring. Taking time in the spring to make sure the water quality is as good as possible will go a long way toward a healthy, clean and easy to maintain pond for the rest of the year. The level of nitrites should be 0 and the PH levels should be between 7 and 8. Testing the water is easy and inexpensive and prevents a lot of problems down the road.

Pumps, filters and all other equipment should be hooked up and turned on. Replace worn filter material and UV bulbs. Caution: All electric wires and connections as well as ground fault interrupters should be checked to make sure everything is in good working order and to avoid electrical shock or injury or death. Repair or discard any equipment with loose or frayed cords.

It is a good idea to add beneficial bacteria in spring, Repeat at regular intervals during the season, following directions for the product. Beneficial bacteria will do several things for the

pond: 1) help jump start the filter. 2) grow right along with the waste output of the fish and help keep the pond clean. 3) help diminish any leftover organic debris.

Spring is the time to move hardy marginals onto their plant shelves and to begin fertilizing all pond plants once the days get longer and the water temperature stays above 50 degrees. Tropical water plants can be moved back into the pond when the water temperature reaches 60 degrees.

Feeding of the fish can resume once the pond filter has been back in operation for a week or so. Feeding of the fish should be started slowly and with a good quality cool weather food or Cheerios. It is important not to overwhelm either the digestive system of the fish or the beneficial bacteria colony.

Test the water every few days until the beneficial bacteria in the filter and in the pond are working at an optimal level. Later in the season testing can be reduced to once every couple of weeks or so.

When fertilizing plants in pots, push aquatic plant fertilizer as deep as possible into the planting medium and as close to the edge of the pot as possible. By doing so, it will help prevent the fertilizer from leaking into the water and from burning the plant roots.

Now you can look forward to a great summer season! □



**Floating Islands:
Functional Beauty**

If you're looking for a new idea for your pond, a floating island might be the perfect answer!.

First, if your beautiful pond plants are being decimated by hungry Koi and goldfish, floating islands can provide a safe haven.

Floating islands also shade the water, discouraging the growth of algae, and providing cover for fish to hide from predators..

Topside, floating islands can provide a safe hangout for frogs and other pond life.

If you have a really large pond, ducks and geese might use an island to nest on, keeping themselves and their eggs safe from predators like foxes, raccoons, and coyotes. Even a bird as large as a trumpeter swan could seek refuge from a persistent predator.

You can buy floating islands commercially. They cost anywhere from \$10 for a single pot, to well into the hundreds of dollars for the largest sizes.



Alternately, for a lot less money, you can build your own island.

Your imagination, resources and wallet are the only limits on the number of ways to build an island. But first you will need some kind of container to hold the plants. Laundry baskets are a common choice.. Plywood or a similar product with holes for pots, and hanging baskets with

Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club Newsletter

coconut liners are also popular options.

If you use some kind of basket, you can line the inside with moss, which can be found at garden shops. Before adding soil and plants, wait for the moss to absorb enough water to bulk up.



Now, for the floating part. Anything that floats, from pool noodles to watertight sections of PVC pipe, will work great. Some people have tried expanding foam, but it is not recommended. The risk is leaching chemicals into the water that could make your fish and other pond life sick. If you need a really large island for ducks or geese, large poles or very large pieces of watertight PVC pipe may be two possibilities for keeping your island afloat.

Hot glue, electrical tape, heat duct tape, zip ties and many other products can be used to attach the floatation device to your island.

Next, you may need to consider securing the island in place so it won't float away from the place where you want it. Some people hook the floaters to the side of the pond with bungees, while others prefer to put a weight in the bottom of the pond and secure the island to it. An island secured to the side of the pond will probably spend time resting along the edge, rather than giving the appearance of floating freely. If you're concerned about predators attaching it to the bottom is your

best bet.

When you've got the island built and have figured out how to secure it, fill it with any plants that appeal to you. Last month's newsletter featuring bog plants may give you some ideas. The bright colored impatiens seen on the color page add a splash of color. Islands and planters may be suitable for both aquatic and terrestrial plants – check to see if there is a surface substrate or simply a place where the roots of aquatic plants extend into the water. If there are fish in the pond, make sure that the roots of the plants are surrounded by a mesh root guard. This way, the plant roots are in the water, but they are kept safe from being eaten by hungry fish.

Note: Large koi have been known to turn over, smaller islands, so you may want to try packing your plants in cocoa fiber, moss, or gravel, rather than soil.

Of Interest:- Floating Islands on a Larger Scale: Artificial floating islands have been used to clean urban bodies of water such as: canals, rivers, estuaries, lakes in city parks, or storm water retention ponds. Constructed islands can be part of a small urban pond or part of the restoration of a larger marshland, or other waterway. They provide nesting and feeding refuges for pond animals, especially when they are located far from the edges of the pond. Companies like Biohaven and Islandsapes create floating islands both for habitat and for water quality.

Floating islands can occur in nature when part of a lake's bank breaks away from the shore and floats around, sometimes for years. The islands act as the lake's liver, purifying its waters. The roots of plants hold the island together and dangle down into the lake's waters, creating a habitat for bacteria, algae, zooplankton, and other critters. These organisms, as well as the plants themselves, play a role in the uptake of nutrients and degradation of toxins in the water.

Summary: Floating islands and planters are one of many choices in pond landscaping. They are a choice that is particularly good for aesthetics, pond filtration, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

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If you would like to write an article for the newsletter or have an idea you would like to have researched, please send your article or your ideas to Norm James at gvpakc@rochester.rr.com

If your mailing address or email change or you would like to receive your newsletter via email, please send your change to: newsletter@gvpakc.org, or call Norm James at 334-3536.

Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club
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Board Members 2009

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Newsletter Editors: N James, B Wheeler and L Hursh,
Webmaster: Norm James - gvpakc@rochester.rr.com

Purpose of the Club

- To promote, create and enlarge the hobby of keeping, breeding, appreciating and exhibiting koi and goldfish.
- To promote and appreciate the hobby of water gardening.
- To disseminate information about koi, goldfish and water gardening.
- To socialize and have fun.

We meet in a very friendly atmosphere at 7:00 pm, the first Friday of every month, at the Rochester Civic Garden Center (the Castle), 5 Castle Park, off Reservoir Ave., in Highland Park. Parking is free. Anyone interested in water gardening and/or Koi is welcome to join us. We ask that you consider joining the club after your third visit.

For more information call Bob Wheeler. (585) 461-5315 or e-mail BobWheeler58@gmail.com or visit the club website at <http://www.gvpakc.org>

Calendar of Events

June 4 2010, No GVPAKC meeting. Meeting date change to June 6. See Plant Auction below.

June 5-6 2010, LilyFest 2010 at Bergen Water Gardens and Nursery, Churchville, NY.

June 6 2010, GVPAKC Plant Auction at 1:00PM at Bergen Water Gardens and Nursery, Churchville, NY.

July is National Water Garden Month

July 2 2010, No GVPAKC meeting. Meeting date change to July 9.

July 9 2010, Meeting: Friday 7PM, GVPAKC meeting at Warner Castle. Dennis Burns will speaker on "Oriental Garden Design"

August 6 2010, No GVPAKC meeting. See Pond Tour below.

August 7 2010, GVPAKC Pond Tour and Picnic.

“Naturally Green” - A live gardening show every Saturday from **9-10 am** on **WYSL 1040 AM.**