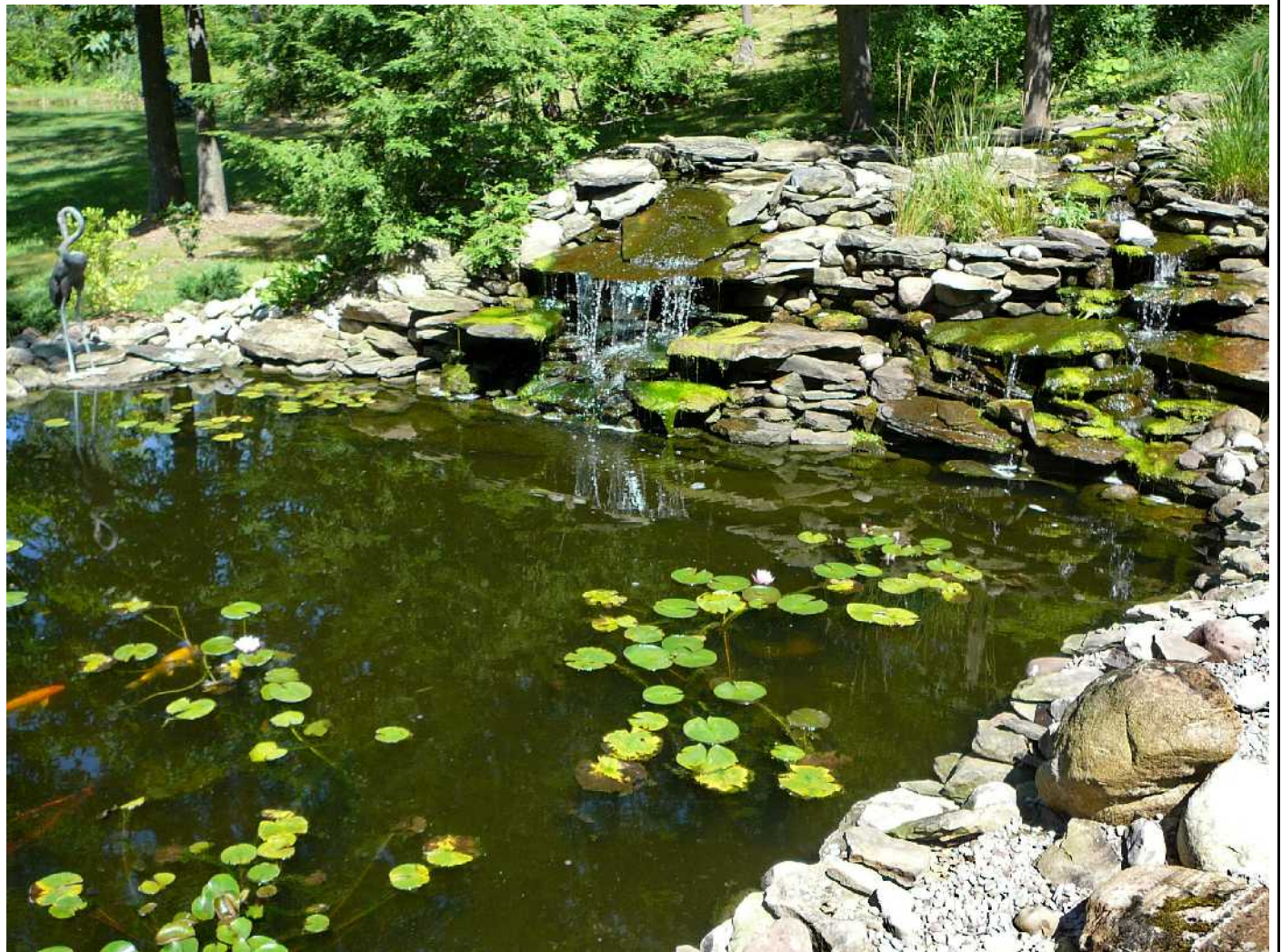


Genesee Valley Pond & Koi Club Newsletter

Volume 14 Issue 10

October 2010



“News From Norm”

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Thank you to Bob Wheeler for taking us on a virtual tour of the 2010 Niagara Frontier Koi and Pond Club Tour. For those of us who had missed the actual tour, it was a great opportunity to see some lovely ponds, and for anyone who took the tour, it was a chance to see aspects that we might have missed and to remember the enjoyment of the day. Great pictures, Bob – and Yvonne! □



A REVIEW OF WINTER POND CONCERNS

Feeding, covering the pond, salt, filters, etc. all need to be considered when getting ready for winter. I will cover briefly the most important things to consider when you have a koi pond.

Feeding

The reason for not feeding in winter months is simply the fish's digestion and inclinations to hibernate are critical. Koi have no stomach. Instead, they have one long intestine, which means that it may take up to four days to digest and excrete anything that enters their mouth. Therefore, as water temperatures fluctuate drastically in the fall months, it can be fatal to the koi to feed on a sunny, warm day if the water temperatures will drop below 50 degrees F in the next few days. The water temperature may not go back up enough for the fish's

digestive system to work, leaving the food to rot in the fish's stomach and ultimately killing it.

Hibernation

With drops in temperature, the fish's entire system will slow down into a state of hibernation, wherein the fish does not require nutrition, but rather uses the stored fats in its body. This is a natural resting state for koi and is suspected to prolong the life, or in other words, increase the life expectancy.

Hibernation means the fish simply exists. It does not expend any energy swimming around, and doesn't hunt for food. Koi can withstand temperatures as low as 39 degrees F. without harm. If your pond is deep enough, with thermal conversion, the bottom will be the warmest place and generally satisfactory for fish to over winter.

Covering The Pond

Some owners choose to cover their ponds to prevent leaves and windblown debris from settling in the bottom and fouling the water. Some simply prefer to cover the pond for the entire winter to protect it from extreme cold and wind in the North. Some covers that work well are constructed of heavy thermal plastic that will allow sun to penetrate but protect from winds, and may be supported by a PVC structure that is easy to assemble at home. Others make an igloo type housing to cover the area and create a microclimate that will not only keep the pond warmer, but may also allow tropical plants to survive outdoors in the pond.

Others simply use bird netting to prevent leaves from entering in the fall, then remove it before ice forms in the winter months. The ice may weigh the netting down, allowing it to fall into the pond and entangle the fish. Removing the netting also gives birds access to a supply of water.

Ponds can be more dangerous in winter than in summer, and precautions should be taken to prevent children and animals from falling through the ice and drowning. Frozen ice is very tempting to them. One way to help keep children and animals safe is to erect a storm fence that will keep them out.

Salting The Pond

According to experts, salt can be utilized in the spring and fall as preventive measure to eliminate most parasites. These two seasons are dangerous for koi because their immune systems are not as effective in colder temperatures. Parasites, however remain active at much lower temperatures. It is important to note the koi are not saltwater fish, nor are they brackish-water fish. They are freshwater fish. If salt is kept in the pond year round, the result will be less effective as the parasites become more salt tolerant, basically immune to salt at the reasonable levels. Salt should be used for 2-3 weeks at a time, then followed by water changes with a de-chlorinator. Salt is also used to give the koi's immune system a boost in spring. It encourages the production of a slime coat, which is the fish's primary defense.

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Heating The Pond

Systems are available that connect to your house heating system through coils, and heat the pond to a stable temperature. With the prevailing winds and winter elements, it would be costly to try heating it above 50 degrees F. all winter without some protective housing. The fish would continue to feed at temperatures between 55-65 degrees F. and the immune system would continue to be effective against most diseases. Some people choose to bring their fish indoors during the winter months and create basement habitats with tanks up to 10,000 gallons, efficient filtration systems, and natural fluorescent lighting.

Filters

To shut down or not to shut down the filters is a hotly debated topic. Some prefer to continue filtering through winters. Some people will keep their pump and filter system set up to keep moving the water and eliminating dangerous gaseous buildup and waste. They will shut the bottom drain and use the mid-water draw and return, periodically, as temperatures permit, pulling the water from the bottom and adding new water to top off. This prevents buildup of debris on the bottom and does not subject the fish to colder temperatures from using the bottom drain all year. The warmest temperatures are on the bottom so you want your koi to have that measure of safety.

Waterfalls

The waterfall must be shut for the winter to prevent supercooling the

water in your pond. Any water from above ground level is subject to chilling and freezing. You do not want your water continually being fed by colder water. The danger to the waterfall plumbing is also to be taken into consideration. Moving water doesn't freeze, but waterfalls can freeze solid and although they look beautiful frozen, ice can damage the pipes or pump. This also applies to any plumbing that is not buried below the freeze-line. In Western NY (Zone 5-6) that would be about 3 feet to avoid frozen conduits and major expenses to repair leaks.

Frozen Ice

Do not use a hammer to break the ice if the top level freezes solid!

Unless the ice stays frozen for more than a couple of days, it shouldn't be a problem. A good thing to have on hand is one of the thermostat-operated livestock heaters that floats on top of the pond and keeps a small area open for exchange of gases. In case of electric failure, hot water in a saucepan can be used. You might want to tie a rope to the pan so you can easily retrieve it from the pond if it falls in. Some people keep generators handy for loss of power in their homes, and these can be the lifesaver for the pond also. □



There are many factors to consider when feeding your Koi:

- Pond size
- Filter size, type, and

amount of time available to clean it

- How many Koi you have in your pond
- The season of the year

Most people feed their Koi 2-5 times a day. If you feed them around 2-3 times a day, they will grow slower or even stay around the same size. If you feed your Koi 3-5 times a day, they will grow fast and reach their maximum size sooner.

You do have to watch how much you feed your Koi; you don't want to overload your biological filter. If that happens, chances are your pond will have an Ammonia spike and that could possibly hurt or kill your Koi. Over-feeding your Koi can harm your Koi too. They can get obese and then suffer from the related health problems.

The more you feed your Koi, the more waste they will excrete. You'll need some way to remove the waste, or it will build up on the bottom of your pond. A good way to remove the fish waste is to install bottom drains and have them flow into your filter. You'll also need to take time each week to clean your filters, otherwise, the waste will build up in them and the water will start channeling through your filter material.

If you have a lot of Koi, you'll need a big pond and a big filter if you plan on feeding them a lot and growing them out. Most Koi usually grow to a couple feet in length, but if you have a Koi with a good bloodline, it could grow up to 3 feet long. Summertime is the growing period for Koi. In a

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natural environment, a Koi will eat as much as it can during the summer in order build up fat to live off of in the winter when food is scarce. You should feed your Koi a food that is high in protein during the summer to boost their growth rates.

Koi can also be fed treats. Koi love oranges, grapefruit, lemons, watermelons, bread, earthworms, grubs and many other healthy fruits and vegetables. If you feed them treats once in a while, be sure to cut them in small pieces so your Koi will be able to eat them easily. Fruits like oranges and grapefruits can be halved and tossed into the water.

In the fall, when your pond temperature drops below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, you should start feeding your Koi a food that is high in wheat germ to help clean out their digestive system. When the water temperature starts dropping below 50 degrees Fahrenheit, you should stop feeding them altogether. When the water temperature gets that cold, your Koi's digestive system stops and any food that is left in them will start to rot their digestive tract.

In the winter, Koi do not eat at all. Their metabolism slows down to a crawl, so they only need their body fat to live off of during the cold months. In the spring, your Koi's metabolism will just be starting up, so it is a good idea to feed them an easily digestible food that is high in wheat germ. You can start feeding them once the water temperature in your pond is constantly above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. A good way

to tell when to start feeding your Koi is by looking at the sides of your pond to see if they have been nibbling at the algae that grows on it. Start by feeding them once a day, and then gradually increase to the amount you will feed them during the summer. When the water temperature gets constantly about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, you can start feeding your Koi food that is high in protein.

A good Koi food will have complete proteins and stabilized Vitamin C in it. Stabilized Vitamin C lasts for months before it breaks down, while regular Vitamin C has a maximum shelf life of 90 days.

It is not a good idea to feed Koi cheap catfish chows, they are usually made up of poor proteins and will fatten your Koi instead growing them out. Cheap catfish chows also tend to make a Koi's colors fade too. □



Norman and Arleen have created a surprising Adirondack getaway right inside the suburban Rochester area. As you turn down their unremarkable driveway, a spellbinding scene unfolds. To the left is the glistening surface of a very large pond, looking more like one of the jewel-like lakes in the north country. On the right, a spacious and beautiful log home overlooks the pond. If you like to hike in the hills, there are trails, a stream, and more ponds. If you prefer fishing, bring your pole and

tackle. Or if you'd like to just sit and relax, choose the deck or the lean-to furnished with rocking chairs to linger and become lost in the tranquility. This is more than just a site to see, it is a place to experience!

□



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
140 Winslow Ave,
Rochester NY 14620

Board Members 2010

President: Bob Wheeler
Vice President: Larry Hursh
Secretary: Jo Anne James
Treasurer: Denis Monefeldt
Pond Tour Chairperson: Norm James
Refreshments: Yvonne Wheeler
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

October 1, 2010, Meeting: Friday 7 PM, GVPAKC meeting at Warner Castle. Lois Dannenburg of Broccolo Tree and Lawn Care Inc. will be speaking on Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

November 5, 2010, Meeting: Friday 7PM, GVPAKC meeting at Warner Castle.

December 3, 2010, Meeting: Friday 7PM, GVPAKC Holiday Party meeting at Warner Castle.

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