

**HAPPY 5TH ANNIVERSARY OWGS!!!!**



**ONTARIO  
WATER GARDEN  
SOCIETY**

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**NEWSLETTER  
Volume 6 Issue 3**

**April 2004**

**Editor Manfred Hubert  
Publisher Laura Grant**

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**Reflections** - by Diana Thomson

For those of you who missed February's meeting, our own Inge Poot, a botanist and former employee of Richters' Herbs, spoke to us about Herbs. She advised that they are categorized into four areas, culinary, aromatic, medicinal and dyeing. Inge identified many different herbs that can grow in wet or moist areas, and also spoke about other popular herbs, their description and uses. Inge kindly brought Richters' catalogues for everyone, (a great source of information) and flats containing a variety of herbs that were later offered for sale. I am sure everyone would agree that Inge's talk was both interesting and informative and made us want to learn more about using herbs in our gardens.

Discussions followed about upcoming garden shows, further details on the IWGS in July and some of the members went on to help set up our booth at Canada Blooms.

**Many Thanks**

Many thanks to all those members who helped with Canada Blooms and Success with Gardening shows. We attracted many new members to the club and raised interest in water gardening. Our thanks also goes to Andy Lohaza who organized and staffed a very impressive display at Niagara College on 20th & 21st of March.

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**A PECULIAR POND IN PENNSYLVANIA** by June Punnett

When my husband's employer relocated us from suburban Toronto to the vicinity of Wilmington, Delaware some eleven years ago, our criteria for buying a house in the States did not include a swimming pool. We fell in love with a house perched on a hilltop in rural southeast Pennsylvania, close to the Delaware border, but we were not sure what to do with its in-ground pool since we do not swim. For the first summer we faithfully maintained the swimming pool, paying someone to periodically add chemicals and service the pump, but rarely used it. From time to time, we would rescue frogs and small snakes from the filters. In the fall, it was a chore to dredge out countless leaves that blew in from the adjacent sycamore, black cherry, and sassafras trees. When the second summer rolled around, we decided to try to convert the pool to a lily pond.

Literature we found on the subject of pool conversion recommended filling to a depth of three feet with rocks and soil. However, we wanted to retain the option of re-converting to a swimming pool, so filling was out of the question. Semi-circular steps descending into the water at the shallow end would make an excellent site for bog plants, but to raise water lilies to a three-foot planting depth in a four-foot to eight-foot sloping pool required some ingenuity. First, though, we pumped out the chemical-infused water, and sealed the water outlets with removable plugs.

Once the pool was dry, we set about building plant platforms. In the shallow end and sloping middle section, towers of bricks and weighted plastic crates were easy to build. My husband's answer to the problem of the deep end was to design and construct tripods of PVC piping and galvanized steel angle iron. The result looked like a science-fiction nightmare, but we reassured ourselves that the hardware would all be invisible beneath three feet of water.

Hardy water lilies (*Nymphaea*) that had been languishing in buckets we now quickly potted up into two-foot diameter containers, using a heavy, clay-based soil that we topped with a layer of small stones. The varieties chosen were 'Commanche' (bronzy leaves, peach flowers), 'Gladstoniana' (white flowers with gold stamens), and 'Sunrise' (double, light yellow flowers). Hoisting the large pots onto tripods in the deep end was strenuous work. More easily, we potted-up and placed on the pool steps and brick towers plants of Floating Heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), Yellow Water Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Blue Iris (*Iris versicolor*), and Graceful Cattail (*Typha laxmannii*). We intended to populate the water with fish, so on the bottom of the pool we placed large containers of the oxygenating plants *Elodea* and *Vallisneria*.

It was now time to add water. We calculated the capacity of the pool to be 25,875 gallons. Our well pump could only run continuously for an hour, then it needed a half-hour cool-down, and we soon realized that it was going to take several days for the water level in the pool to reach the height of the plant pots. We placed wet sacks over the lilies, and the pots were hosed down frequently to prevent the plants from drying out in the sun. With agonizing slowness, the water level rose and finally submerged the plant pots. Then we sat back and waited for things to happen. A few days later, the entire pond turned to smelly green Jello. This was only a temporary phenomenon, thank goodness. The water cleared before the neighbours could complain, but not soon enough to prevent a white-tail deer fawn from mistaking the turgid, green expanse for solid ground and falling in. Hubby performed the difficult feat of dragging the fawn out of the pond, and was kicked in the chest for his efforts. Not long afterwards, a large dog went for a swim, but climbed out unaided without knocking over any plant pots.

As the heat of summer began to wane, we added fish to the pond. About 100 two- to three-inch goldfish were released in to the now clear water. They seemed fine at first, active and eating well, but after a few weeks began showing signs of stress, and then some died. We determined that lack of oxygen was the problem, and installed a small fountain. Thereafter, the goldfish prospered and increased despite Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, Kingfishers, and the occasional temperature inversion following heavy rains. In fact, they did so well that a few years later we felt it wise to add some predatory sunfish to reduce their numbers.

When nighttime temperatures fell below freezing, we removed the fountain and replaced it with a "bubbler" that pumped oxygen into the water at a depth of one foot. Rising bubbles kept a small patch of water free of ice all winter, though the equipment occasionally failed on sunny days due to

condensation freezing inside the transparent plastic tube and blocking the airflow.

Next year, the pond plants performed spectacularly. Yellow Iris pseudacorus bloomed in early May, with purple Iris versicolor joining in about a week later, and the water lilies began blooming in late May. Yellow Floating Heart flowers appeared in late June. Mats of water lily and Floating Heart foliage began spreading out over the water, providing cover for the fish just in time for the arrival of the first heron. It was a Great Blue, and I was aghast at the size of it. I thought for sure it would clean out the pool in one visit, but the canny goldfish dived for cover and played invisible. We had named some of the fish (Chretien, Gorby, and Bob - who had a swim-bladder problem), so we suffered trauma whenever we lost a little fishy friend.

As well as fish, we had introduced to the pond some bullfrog tadpoles. They looked massive compared to the tiny tadpoles I remembered catching as a child in England, and I wondered how large the frogs were going to be. I should have been worrying about how loud they were going to croak, as our bedroom window overlooked the pond. We were never able to leave our window open at night once the frogs matured. Small green frogs peeping and toads trilling provided musical backup to the booming bullfrogs.

One of the 'Gladstoniana' water lilies in the deep end died, and we replaced it with the attractive variety 'Arc en Ciel' (emerging leaves purple, turning to green splashed with pink, with pale pink flowers). It proved impossible to remove the heavy pot containing the dead plant, so we decided to just drop the new pot on top of it. First, however, we had to rig up a system of ropes and wooden supports to half-swing, half float the new pot into place. We only succeeded by pure luck. From then on, we did not attempt to place new containers in the pool. Whenever a plant floated out of its pot or stems broke off and began drifting around, we would simply tie a stone to the roots and throw it back in the water.

After several years, fallen leaves formed a rich sludge on the bottom of the pond into which water lilies and oxygenating plants rooted, and as the goldfish population exploded there was enough fish excreta in the water to adequately nourish the plants without soil. Eventually, the fronds of Vallisneria began to resemble a kelp forest and threatened to fill the deep end completely. We were forced to regularly rake out heaps of it, which we bagged and traded to a local nursery for fish food.

Water snails grazed the grassy algae growing on the walls of the pool, but herons picked them off if they strayed too close to the surface. Mosquitoes never troubled us, as the joint efforts of ever-hungry fish and patrolling dragonflies reduced their numbers to near zero. We enjoyed many a summer evening sitting by the pond as the lily flowers closed, feeding the fish, listening to the frogs and toads, and watching first swallows and then bats swooping over the water, while fireflies began to flicker under the nearby trees.

When we sold the house in Pennsylvania and moved back to Ontario, ten years after creating the pond, we were fortunate that the new owners promised to care for all the plants and fish that we had called ours. Now, we are starting water gardening anew, and this time we have a four-acre, stream-fed, earth-bottomed pond to play with.

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### **My Favorite Water Garden Plants - Part 3 - Hardy Water Lilies**

by John Vanneste

*as presented by Richard Koogle, Lilypons Gardens*

Tropical water lilies are the romance and glamour of the water lily world with day and night blooming varieties. They show more blooms and more petals and give more fragrance than their hardy counterparts and they can take the heat. In fact, they need the heat for good color and good growth.

Tropical water lilies cannot survive the cold of winter, but, if you are looking for vibrant, spectacular blooms in the most beautiful array of colors, tropicals are for you. With one day bloomer and one night bloomer, you're covered night and day.

The profuse blooms of tropicals make exquisite cut flowers. The first buds appear in late spring, opening 3-4 days each, and continue repeated bloomings until frost. Tropicals grow in zones 3-11, can survive winter in zones 10-11 and require a minimum 4 hours direct sun and still water to show their best.

If you're not sure that you are looking at a tropical, it's easy to tell - they usually have wavy edges to the petals.

### **Day Bloomers**

My favorite day blooming tropicals include "William McLane", one of the best purple tropical lilies. The deep purple blooms have more than 40 petals per flower. The reddish-brown pads are splashed with ribbons of green.

"Key Largo" new for 2003, is a spectacular day bloomer with large lavender hued blossoms and mottled pads. This lily was an exclusive Lilypons introduction.

Another of my favorites is "Miami Rose", an eye-catching lily with raspberry red flowers showing more than 50 petals each. It's a great bloomer and the bold mottled foliage makes it a great choice if you like lots of colour.

A unique tropical, "Islamorada" features deep purple flowers accented by off-white flecks on each of the petals. It has a long blooming season and is very free flowering. Strongly viviparous, it is a bit hardier and shade tolerant since it comes from cooler climates.

"Charles Thomas" features light blue stellate flowers on compact plants with heavily mottled viviparous leaves which develop plantlets in the middle of the leaf. These plantlets then produce a new plant when it drops into the soil in the pond bottom. A profuse bloomer, even in the shade.

### **Night Bloomers**

Night blooming tropical lilies prefer warmer water than day bloomers. In water less than 70F, they will send out tubers and small arrowhead-like leaves grouped into clusters, an indication that the plant is shocked. If this happens, the lily needs to be repotted and the water needs to be warmed up before it goes back in the pond.

"Texas Shell Pink" is an extremely popular night bloomer prized for its delicate pinky-white blossoms that seems to glow in the dark. The blossoms are held high above the dark yellow-green pads,

My favourite night bloomer is "Red Flare". This lily produces magnificent red flowers up to 10" in size held up to 12" above the water. The large reddish bronze pads contrast well with other lily pads.

Another great night bloomer is "Wood's White Knight". Its huge creamy vanilla blossoms born in profusion are nicely accented with lemon yellow stamens and held over bright emerald green pads with scalloped edges. Use soft underwater lighting for great effect.

The Victoria water lilies are exceptional and exquisite tropical, night blooming water lilies with

leaves that can grow to 6' or even 8' across. The blooms are pure white on day one, deep pink on day two and pure red on day three and very fragrant when in bud. The leaves and stems are spiky. Victorias require regular fertilization and ample space to grow and bloom. Also essential is tropical water temperature, 80 degrees F. and above. Plants are started from seeds in February in a heated greenhouse in 80F water. A good source for more information is Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania.

#### Care and Feeding of Tropical Water Lilies

- Do not over winter outdoors
- Keep water over 55F, add warm water if it drops below as plants may go into shock (in our Texas facility we add 72F water from a well)
- Reproduce through tubers, but sometimes won't product tubers, so need to stress it by letting the water cool down, letting the root partially dry out
- Check websites for reproduction techniques

#### - Joey Tomocik's method

- Rinse the root
- Gather tubers
- Store in Ziploc bags in distilled water at 56F in refrigerator
- Plant in February in the dark

Lotus ~ In the next newsletter

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#### **Carl Joseph Mazur B.Sc., B.Ed.,**

Carl is a 38-year-old high school teacher who has been growing Carnivorous Plants for over 25 years. Starting out with a single Venus Flytrap, his hobby has now grown from an interest to a passion, now growing over 600 Carnivorous Plants in his greenhouse in Thorold, ON. His particular interest lies in Sarracenia, a genus of ten species and a number of subspecies of Carnivorous Pitcher Plants native to North America. His collection includes all recognized taxonomic forms as well as many novel genetic mutations. He and his wife Melissa, have spent hundreds of hours in the field in the South Eastern USA and Canada, studying and photographing these amazing plants.

Carl has taken his passion for plants to higher levels in the last few years. He now serves as the President of the International Carnivorous Plant Society. The ICPS is dedicated to preservation and conservation of Carnivorous Plants, as well as acting a source of educational and cultural information. Not only does the ICPS publish a quarterly scientific journal, they are also the International Registration Authority for Cultivars of Carnivorous Plants. Carl is now involved in a grass roots organization aimed at creating a national collection of cultivated Sarracenia species. This organization will act much like a seed/plant exchange that acts to preserve old- world fruits and vegetables. As you will see in his presentation, Sarracenia are disappearing quickly in the wild, and without efforts of dedicated hobbyists and institutions, the future for Sarracenia is bleak.

**~~~~Come and celebrate the 5th anniversary of our club!~~~~**

#### **Coming Events**

**Next Meeting April 4th 2004  
12 noon, Toronto Botanical Garden  
( formerly Civic Garden Center) 777 Lawrence Ave. E. Toronto**

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**Speaker: Carl Mazur, "Sarasenias for Ontario gardens"**

**May 16th** : Meeting at Koi Nursery, 771 Reach Street, Port Perry, 905-982-1509

**June 12th** : Plant sale,

**July 22nd-25th** : IWGS Symposium-, Inn on the Park Hotel, Toronto.

**Aug 14 or 15** : Garden Tours,

**Sept 19th, Oct 24th & Nov 28th** General meetings

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**AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

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| John Vanneste   | Vice President & Advertising    | 416 237- 9396 |
| Ann Michalek    | Treasurer                       | 416 425-3329  |
| Peter Poot      | Secretary                       | 905 640-5643  |
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| Christine Gill  | Membership                      | 905 986-0310  |
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| John Badali     | Door Prizes & Tickets           | 905 278-4966  |
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