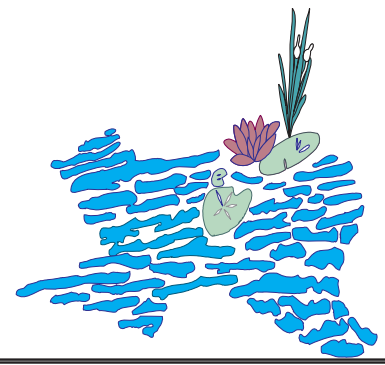


Water Works



Newsletter of the North Texas Water Garden Society

July, 2009

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Just Add Water, Part 2

Kevin Fuess, KHA

Last month I started you thinking about a water filter to remove chlorine. Well I'm doing some testing on this with some interesting results. But they are not quite finished so, sorry. Although I planned on presenting it this month, you will have to wait till next month for the final conclusion. So for now, let's continue with other sources of water:

Rain water: Mother Nature's global distillery; universal solvent; pure water (sounds like a poor mountaineer named Jed should be singing this).

If you are a master gardener, or have had the opportunity to hear any programs by a master gardener, you are aware that rain water collection has been the hot topic this year. And at the risk of sounding like Martha Stewart, this is a good thing. I collect rain water for my carnivorous bog. But what role could this play in our water gardening?

Rain water, basically the same as distilled water, contains nothing. It has no buffering capacity and is, therefore, highly influenced by environmental conditions. Which is why, although pure water would have a pH of 7.0, rain water by merely coming into contact with the carbon dioxide in the air will have a pH of around 5.5. Your pond conditions can easily overcome the minute amount of acid that will be found in the rain water with the result being no change to the pond pH. During evaporation solids are left behind in a more concentrated

form. Topping off with pure water will bring the level back to where it started. Sounds pretty good, huh? But let's think about this for a minute. One of the reasons to do a water change is to reduce the concentration of detrimental compounds that are produced in the pond. Nitrates will continue to rise as a result of the nitrogen cycle. Dissolved organic carbons (DOCs), a byproduct of decaying organic matter, will accumulate. You will see this as foam most often at the base of your waterfall. And pheromones will build up affecting growth and spawning. Topping off the pond does not reduce the any of these regardless of the water source. But remember, we are talking about rain water right now. So let's remove extra water then refill. This will successfully dilute the pollutants. Mission accomplished. Ah, remember the other reason we do water changes? Trace minerals are being used in the assimilation of vitamins and alkalinity (buffering capacity) is being consumed through metabolic processes. These two components are not replaced with rain water and may eventually run out. I guess there's not enough room for a story here, so I'll just give the condensed version: I spoke to a person that killed his fish with rain water. He wondered if there was something in the water, I suspect it is what was lacking from the water; salt. The setup allowed for a very rapid complete water change with rain water collected from his roof and stored in a silo. My opinion—the

See Water, continued on Page 3

Next NTWGS Meeting

July 9, 2009
7:00 PM

Potting and Caring for
Aquatic Plants

Dallas Water Utilities
Building, 8915 Adlora
Lane, Dallas, TX. Mapsco
27T

See Map on Page 8

Water Works

Water Works is published monthly by the North Texas Water Garden Society.

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President's Pad

What a great pond tour! I hope you all had a chance to visit some of them. I am always amazed at the creativity of our pond owners and am in awe of such beautiful ponds and yards. Every year we have another project in mind for our yard, so our attention is drawn to those features for inspiration. This year it was decks and pergolas for us, and basic pond construction for the couple who went with us, and none of us were disappointed. We also enjoyed the opportunity to meet members and get to know others better. I would like to thank each of you who opened your gates and shared your gardens with the metroplex. It was a hot weekend and hosts didn't get to escape to an air-conditioned car. Bless all of you for putting up with the heat and providing cold water to your visitors.

If you came to the June meeting, you were treated to an improv performance from The Not Ready for Pond Tour Players. It's probably no surprise that some of our officers are quite at home hamming it up in front of a crowd, and it's even possible that Joe and Lisa have missed their calling. But it was fun even for an introvert like me, and I hope we made a basic informational meeting a lot more fun. And didn't Lisa and Allison do a great job with refreshments? For those of you who haven't been to a meeting in awhile, we hope to see you back again in July. Most meetings aren't as hectic as the June meeting but it would be nice if all meetings were so well attended.

Since we pick up so many new water gardeners after the tour, we thought it would be a good time for a plant potting demonstration. If you have never repotted your lilies or other water plants and want to know how to

See President, continued on Page 4

The North Texas Water Garden Society is a non-profit organization with the following objectives: To encourage a greater appreciation of and interest in water gardens; to disseminate information of interest and help to the members; and to stimulate the study and culture of aquatic plants, fish and ponds.

Editor, Susan Moore

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North Texas Water Garden Society

<http://www.ntwgs.org>

Contributions to Water Works are always welcome and may be submitted to the editor by mail, fax or email. Letters to the Editor will be printed as space permits. NTWGS accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the contents of this newsletter. Reproduction is permitted provided that this newsletter and the original source are credited.

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Water, continued from Page 1

fish went into osmotic shock. The fast replacement with 100% rain water may also have caused a drastic drop in pH. Don't panic if you are using rain water to top off your pond though. If you have potted plants, minerals in the soil will supplement the pond water. Just be cautious of rapid large water changes.

Continuing with our sources of water let's go from the sky to the ground and look at well water. The use of well water depends on whether it is a community well—in which case the water will be treated and should be considered the same as tap water—or if this is a personal well, straight out of the ground. What could be better with no chlorine/chloramines to deal with? Well water generally has a higher mineral content but suffers from a lack of oxygen. Remember our discussion about oxygen? Large water changes with this water should be accompanied with supplemental aeration.

Next month, I promise, I will have the water filter information.

President, continued from Page 2

divide them, pot them, and fertilize them, this is the meeting you have been waiting for. Even experienced gardeners can pick up tips they haven't heard before or reminded of things they haven't done in awhile. Kevin Fuess, our own water garden guru will be presenting this demonstration. If there is a particular plant you have questions about, shoot him an email at thepondguy@ntwgs.org and put July Potting Demonstration Question in the subject line. See you there!

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The Times They Are A-Changing

And we are changing with them. We have plans to begin sending out newsletters by email by fall. If your e-mail is on file with us but you would rather continue receiving it by USPS, let us know by email at membership@ntwgs.org or leave a message on the NTWGS voice mail at 972-994-1140. If you have an email on file but have requested not to be contacted through it, or if you do not have an email on file, you will continue to receive your newsletters through USPS.

The Versatile Nandina

Ahh, the wonderful nandina. Its name seems to invoke a love/hate reaction in many people. Most gardeners recognize it as a tough durable shrub for many situations, but some seem to simply hate it! Since I lean heavily in favor of this great plant, I'm going to extol some of its virtues. Perhaps I will win over a few converts or at least open up the minds of a nandina hater or two. In fact, my son and his wife recently purchased a home with one of the most beautiful, healthy stands of colonized compacta nandinas across their back fence I have ever seen. Unfortunately, Jessica doesn't like the way they colonize an area and now I am in the process of convincing her they are truly a gift!

Although the early origins of nandina point to Japan, one of the

earliest recorded imports of nandina to the west was brought from Canton China around 1800. In China it was often planted near temples and pruned to reveal the bamboo-like stalks, hence the name "Heavenly Bamboo." Nandina is in the Berberidaceae or Barberry family. It will grow in climate zones 6 to 9, and many cultivars have been developed over the centuries making the nandina one of the most versatile and adaptable group of plants for use in north Texas landscapes. Depending on the variety, nandinas can grow in conditions ranging from full shade to full sun and in soils ranging from heavy clay to well drained sand. Although they can thrive in heavy soils, most will not tolerate low areas with poor drainage. Of course sun exposure and soil types will affect growth habits, but cultivars will normally remain true to form. Probably the biggest difference seen is more pronounced fall foliage color in sunny exposures as opposed to plants grown in the shade. All nandinas turn a burgundy red in the winter to some extent.

Here are some of the best, some commonly seen and some not so common:

Nandina domestica: The common nandina. It may grow as tall as 7 feet and will slowly spread to colonize an area. They produce white flowers in early summer and red berries in fall. The cut berries will last for weeks in floral or Christmas arrangements.

Nandina domestica 'compacta': A

more compact form of the common nandina with all the same characteristics, but growing only to about 4 feet tall.

N. domestica 'Gulfstream': Perhaps the most dense compact form, but with less flowers and berries. It has brilliant fall color, and bluish-green summer foliage, and will grow to about 4 feet.

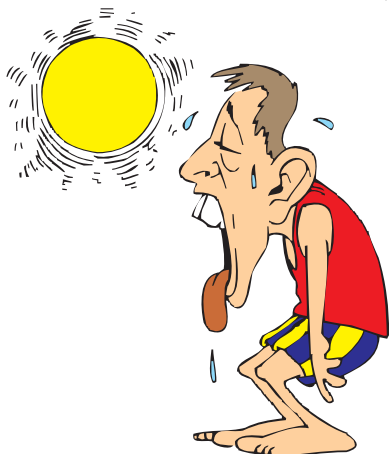
N. domestica 'Moonbay': It is similar to Gulfstream but with a lime green tint to the summer foliage. Only grows to about 3 feet.

N. domestica 'Harbor Dwarf': The shortest form, slowly grows to only about 18 inches tall. Similar in appearance to the large domesticas, it may be thin in heavy shade.

N. domestica 'Jaytee': It is similar to Harbor Dwarf, and is sold as Harbor Belle. It has a slight pinkish cast to new foliage.

N. domestica 'nana': Nana nandina is dissimilar to all other varieties with a softer leaf that curls in, with no flowers, and no berries. This and its cultivar 'Firepower' are very commonly used. This is one of the more finicky nandinas however, and may struggle in alkaline clay soils. It needs good drainage and in my opinion is better suited for shadier areas. In full sun and heavy soils it often looks really bleached out in summer. I think this is the

See Nandinas, continued on Page 5



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The Pond of Linda and Ladis Barr

Linda and Ladis Barr's backyard is a tranquil oasis, and a retreat from work and their busy lives. The couple moved to Waxahachie from Lancaster almost eight years ago, and began the process of transforming their acre. While Linda loves planting flowers, gardening, and just working outside, it was Ladis who brought in the pond and expanded the gardens throughout the entire backyard. He first put in a small pond and waterfall as a water accent in the garden, but soon he wanted a larger pond, and finally an even larger pond, until their current pond is the focal point of the backyard. It is thirty-two feet by sixteen feet, with depths from two to four feet, and it holds about eight thousand gallons of water, thirty koi, and ten to fifteen goldfish. The sides are large pieces of slate, with big boulders along the sides, and a tall waterfall flowing into it. Linda jokes that he is fascinated with water and waterfalls.

Ladis did all the work on the pond, flagstone walkways, and gardens, except placing the boulders and planting some of the larger trees. Their back yard has been four years in the making, from their first little pond to their current large pond. Along the back of the yard are some large berms which are covered with bluebonnets and then assorted wildflowers in the spring. Adding interest to the berms the rest of the year are bronze statues and other yard art. Linda names the sections of their yard, like the African section with the bronze giraffe and rhinoceros; and the outback section with razor back hogs, moose, and elk walking across the berms. She also has a children's section with statues of children, and there are two statue fountains standing on the edge of the pond.

Linda is a former home economics teacher who now works at Home

Depot. In addition to gardening, she loves scrapbooking, sewing, and cooking. Ladis is the fire marshall in Lancaster. Ladis is from Cameron, Linda is from San Antonio, and his daughter now lives in Tyler. With no other family nearby, their Australian shepherd, is their baby and king of the castle.

When herons are spotted, and won't leave the area, Linda turns the dog out for pond patrol. They have had a problem with herons since the first small pond, which is one reason they wanted a larger pond. With the many hiding places in the pond, and the depth of the water, the Barr's haven't lost any fish to the herons since the new pond was built. Beside the pond is a pergola, and Linda has often seen a heron perched on it looking down into the pond. One morning, she looked outside to see two of the birds beside the pond. She once thought herons had gotten all of their fish, but about a week later, she threw a handful of food into the pond, and they all came out from hiding.

The Barr's pond is one of forty-eight ponds you probably enjoyed on the tour this year.

Water Garden Tip of the Week

Oxygen deficiencies in fish ponds are most likely in the heat of the summer. Fish need oxygen and insufficient aeration may result in dead fish. In very hot weather the fish use more oxygen and the water holds less. Consider supplementing aeration in the form of a waterfall, fountain, or air pump. If you have a heavy fish population or low circulation this is even more important.

Nandinas, continued from Page 4

plant that gives nandinas their 'bad' reputation.

Other varieties that are less common but also of some merit are:

N. domestica 'Royal Princess': Similar to the common or compacta nandina but with a finer, lacier foliage.

N. domestica 'Plum Passion': A great compact form with a noticeably purple tint to the summer foliage. This cultivar hasn't made a big splash in the local market due to its being rather expensive.

N. domestica 'Sienna Sunrise': Another compact form prized for fiery red new foliage, and also rarely seen in our market.

N. domestica 'filamentosa': Also rarely sold in our area, it seems to struggle with clay soil. It is very unique though, with a lacy dissected foliage and short habit.

The cardinal rule for nandinas is to choose a type that will be an appropriate size for your area, and then never shear them! Nandinas should be left in their natural form. Hand prune the stalks at the base to remove the taller or shorter canes and reduce the overall size depending on the look you want. They respond well to watering and fertilizing, but well established nandinas can grow with virtually no assistance, even through our worst summers. Nandinas are sometimes spread when birds eat the seeds, so it is not unusual to see a *domestica* growing untended in a completely wild area, a testament to their durability.

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Mints in the Garden

Jan Vinyard, Longview Gardens

MENTHE aquatica (Water Mint) makes a lovely addition to the water garden. Add a pot of mints and you can harvest a few stems to add to the pitcher any time tea is being served! Water Mint has fragrant burgundy and green leaves atop burgundy stems. You will also enjoy the purple summer flowers. Just like most other mints, Water Mint will colonize when planted at the edge of the water feature. In a container it will grow to about 12-18 inches. Its maximum water depth above the crown is 6 inches.

See Mints, continued on Page 7

Mints, continued from Page 6

Not all Menthe will perform well in a wet environment, but here are some that will grow nicely wet or dry, and in sun or partial shade. Leaf form and flower color is quite different. Pick a few to try this season!

Black Stemmed Peppermint: Dark green cupped foliage and lavender white flower.

Egyptian Mint: Large, fancy leaves and lush fragrance.

Hillary's Sweet Lemon Mint: Apple-lime mint; aggressive female mint with lavender flower spikes. Named after Hillary Clinton.

Lavender Mint: Peppermint with a lavender scent.

Lime Mint: Distinctive lime flavor, dark purple runners, light purple flowers.

Margarita Mint: Lime scented mint; purple and green leaves; does not spread from rhizome, but grows well.

Marilyn's Salad Mint: Use fresh tender leaves in salads for a delightful difference! For mild flavor, grow in the shade.

Orange Mint: Beautiful coppery tint to foliage excellent flavor for tea.

Chocolate Mint: Chocolate Mint flavor. Add a few leaves to coffee as it is brewing.

Sweet Pear Mint: Flavored and scented as though with ripe pears.

Swiss Mint: Light, refreshing mint scent and flavor.

M. Rotundifolia Georgia Apple Mint: Purple flowers and purple-green leaves.

M. Spicata, Kentucky Colonel Mint: Outstanding spearmint selection for culinary and fragrance use.

Reflections, Newsletter of Water Garden Society of Greater Kansas City, June, 2004

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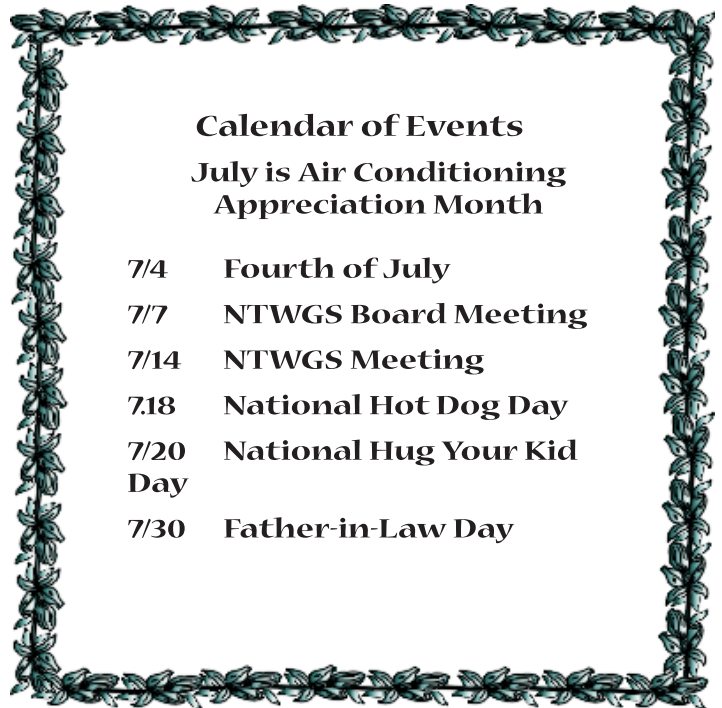
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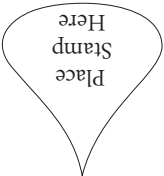
Calendar of Events

July is Air Conditioning Appreciation Month

- 7/4 Fourth of July
- 7/7 NTWGS Board Meeting
- 7/14 NTWGS Meeting
- 7.18 National Hot Dog Day
- 7/20 National Hug Your Kid Day
- 7/30 Father-in-Law Day

NTWGS Voice Mail Number
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REMINDER!
Next Meeting July 14, 2009



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