

HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017

April Field Trip

John, Jan, Kim and Jack were at Hill Country to watch the lecture about disappearing fountains. John got 3 new goldfish and a beautiful, large, kinetic, copper spinner. Toured the grounds and was fascinated by a huge, over 2000 square ft. Fairy garden with caves, waterfalls, rock ledge about 3 ft. high. Caves and trees all in proportion. Major fairy garden. The 3 waterfalls really added to the scope and majestic quality of this exhibit. Pam and all fairy garden lovers would have been impressed.

Jan

May Meeting

Calling all members, especially those of you who will be showing your pond on the 2017 Pond Tour. The pond tour committee has some very important information that will be presented to you at this meeting. PLEASE ATTEND THIS VERY IMPORTANT MEETING! It will be May 16 at 6:30 PM at Pam Thomason's home. Pam requests that we bring chips & dip or a dessert to share.

Tech Tip

From Webb's Water Gardens

Feed aquatic plants monthly during the growing season at a rate of one tablet per gallon of soil. When water temperatures rise above 72 degrees, feeding should be increased to every two weeks. Insert tablets deep into the soil three inches from the

crown of the plant. When using multiple tablets, space them uniformly around the plant.

Pond Vac

As a reminder, this is a "Members Only" benefit. You can rent this super-duper pond cleaning machine very reasonably! John Enders is the "official pond Vac keeper". Call him 254-848-9596 or send him an email at jnenders@aol.com to schedule your time with the machine. One note of caution when using the pond Vac, watch how much water you are removing from your pond!! It works so well sucking up the yuk that one can easily forget how much water is also being removed! That is the voice of experience talking!!

The Water Garden's Tip of the Week

When adding packaged bacteria to the pond, turn off any ultraviolet lights for 24-48 hours to allow the bacteria time to colonize on surfaces. Failure to do so will kill your newly added bacteria if it is not turned off for 24-48 hours!

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Another

The Water Garden's Tip of the Week

Increase the life of your pump with routine care. Every time you clean your filter, inspect your pump and clear away any

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017

debris from the intake. The number one cause of premature pump failure is neglect (number 2 is using the power cord as a handle). Clean away debris and check around the impeller to ensure that there are no blockages

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Green Classrooms

By Harv

Talk about pond reclamation/maintenance and I have some stories to show and tell! Several years ago, I took on the Robinson Elementary school and some of the WISD Green Classrooms as a project for the Texas Master Naturalist program. In the beginning of the project, I started with G.L. Wiley Middle School which is no longer active and Sul Ross Elementary which has succumbed to the wrecking ball and now has eating establishments all over the property.



G.L Wiley Middle School which is now an “opportunity Center”



Sul Ross Elementary which is now occupied by Chick-fil-A and Panera Bread.

Robinson Elementary, Provident Heights, Hillcrest PDS, and Tennyson Elementary are still active and under my original project banner.

Robinson Elementary



In the beginning March 2010

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017



A serious reclamation project about to begin in March 2010

I received a call from a teacher at Robinson Elementary School asking for help and advice as to what could be done to resurrect their “cute little pond”. I met her there one afternoon to assess the scope of the project. We discussed various options and developed a list of wants/needs. I went home and drew up a diagram with a plan and potential parts list with estimated costs. I gave it to her so she could develop a grant request for the money to do the project. A couple weeks later, she called to say the grant was approved and we ordered the materials and began work.

We formed a team of workers to help with the cleanout and reconstruction. A couple of work days later, the reconstruction began in earnest.



Cleanout nearly finished and new bog is under construction with the willing help of a 4th grade student, 2 pond society members, and several teachers.



New liner installed and new bog is nearly complete.

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017



Re-construction is complete and filling with water May 25, 2010.

The teacher that spearheaded the reclamation left and another one assumed the responsibility for the pond. Same old story, she also left but there was no one that filled the position. Therefore, the pond slowly declined due to lack of someone to help me care for it. In the summer of 2016, I received a call from a Robinson science teacher that had taken a serious interest in the Green Classroom specifically, the pond. We drained, and cleaned the several years' worth of muck off the bottom. I repotted and fertilized all 7 lilies that I had put in there in the past. The fish had all succumbed to nature's ways so we didn't have to worry about taking care of them during the cleanout and refilling process.

There are three oak trees and a catalpa tree in very close proximity to the pond which seriously adds to the debris that gets into it. The catalpa tree contributes its big flowers, then very large leaves and then the foot long seed pods and then in the fall, more leaves

are added to the mix. It is quite a frustrating mess to try to keep up with.



February 2017 cleanout



Up and running beautifully again April 2017

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

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Provident Hts. Elementary



In the beginning (April 2009)

Several years ago, this was a nice little water feature for the kids and teachers to care for and enjoy. The primary responsible teacher took another job on a different campus. No one was willing to step up and show interest and willingness to help me take care of it. Sooo needless to say, the whole garden area including the pond fell into disrepair as I have my own ponds to maintain and did not have the time or energy to properly care for it.

Finally, the Superintendent, a teacher assistant and a highly motivated science teacher contacted the Baylor “Steppin Out” coordinator for some assistance. On April 8, 2017, 25 girls showed up to work. Those young ladies took on the whole garden area with energy and enthusiasm that made me proud of our youth!!



2015, 2 years after responsible teacher left

5 members of the team took on the monster task of totally cleaning out the pond. One little pot of Golden Reed had completely taken over the whole pond with a solid mass of roots! It even choked out the lilies!! The girls did an amazing job of cutting that mass into moveable chunks that they then lifted out and put into trash bags!



Progress after about 1 hour of work by the “pond team”

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Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017



Of course, they found some interesting “occupants”. These girls obviously not the least bit afraid of snakes!

By the end of the day, there were a bunch of ladies as well as the resident science teacher, her husband and me that were in need of a shower and some clean clothes! We all needed some rest also!



A very happy science teacher, her Hubby & me after the work was done. We were the “working supervisors” that kept the “Steppin’ Out” team focused.



The total cleanout was completed in about 3 ½ hours!



The “evidence” shows how much “stuff” was removed from the pond and the rest of the garden area.

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Volume 9 Issue 4

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Hillcrest PDS



Nasty plugged bog cleanout May 2010

In the spring of 2010, one of the science teachers at Hillcrest PDS contacted me and asked if I would help with their Green Classroom pond. I agreed to look at it to see what needed to be done. I met her at the school one afternoon. That poor pond needed a lot of TLC to get it back to the pretty pond it once was. She recruited another teacher and between the 3 of us, we began the process. The bog was so full of crud that water could no longer flow through it! We (they) dug all of the gravel out, and washed it. Lots of poking and probing and flushing later, we finally removed the last of the muck. Put the gravel back in and started the water flowing again. There was only a 300 gpm pump running a spitter and the bog.



I scrounged a used skimmer, pump and tubing from Hill Creek Nursery (which is no longer in operation). Put it in the deepest part of the pond on top of the liner. Since it was on top of the liner, I weighed it down with cinder blocks to keep it from floating. There was no waterfall so I enlisted Walter Pierce's help, since he lives just across the street, and we built one with some leftover materials I had on hand.



Skimmer and bog pump box

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Waterfall under construction



Reworked waterfall and cleaned out pond with the requisite “new pond green water”



Waterfall complete amongst the growth of unchecked plants.

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

May 2017

Tennyson Elementary



A 200 gallon tub surrounded by landscape rocks with a 200 gph pump creates a mini water feature in this Green Classroom. The students laid all of the landscape rock around the tub.

Please support these businesses who have agreed to give our members a discount at their stores.

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Making outdoors awesome

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HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 9 Issue 4

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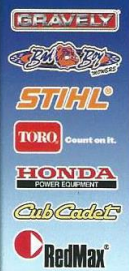
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