

HOTWGPS Newsletter

Volume 12 issue 4

Happy Easter!

April 2020

HOTWGPS Events

Due to the virus issues and concern for everyone's safety, the April meeting is canceled.



Membership Dues

As a reminder, our 2020 membership dues were due January 1, 2020. Thank you to those of you who have paid yours. To those of you who have yet to pay them, you can mail them to HOTWGPS, PO Box 852, Lorena, TX 76655.

Membership levels are:

- a. Individual -- \$18 per year
- b. Family -- \$24 per year
- c. Associate NON - Voting membership -- \$12 per year.
- d. Corporate/business -- \$100 per year.



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 AquaNooga Tip of the Week

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

As your pond starts to warm and fish get more active remember to use the water temperature as your guide for feeding fish. Avoid feeding until the water temperature is **CONSISTENTLY** above 50 F. Above 60 F and you can transition to your summer food. Water temperature should be checked at about 1 foot of depth.

Editor's note: there are other thoughts about when we can start feeding such as if they are actively swimming looking for food but the water temp is still below 50 we can give them a **LITTLE** wheat germ based food every now and then.



The following three articles are from THEPOND GUY BLOGS this month. Naturally, they recommend their products.

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Do you have any tips for adding plants to my pond?

Asked by Patricia of Charleston, WV

A: Water lilies and lotus ... blue flag iris ... hyacinth ... so many aquatic plants, so little time. A pond full of these colorful beauties – along with the hardworking, submerged oxygenators – adds splendor and life to your waterscape. Not only that, but birds will visit, bugs will buzz through and aquatic critters will stop by, attracted by the blooms and foliage.

Like your terrestrial garden, a water garden needs some planning and forethought; without it, you could end up with an aquatic jungle. Here's what we recommend for adding plants to your pond.

Choose wisely

Before you get your feet wet (and your hands dirty!), first consider what types of plants you want in your water feature and how many you'll need.

Aquatic plants are typically categorized by their function in a pond. They include floating plants, like water hyacinth and water lettuce, (NOT IN TEXAS!) that have

roots that reach down from the water's surface; submerged plants, like vallisneria and hornwort, that live on the pond's bottom and release oxygen into the water; bog plants, like cattails and iris, that ring the perimeter of the pond; and water lilies and lotus, which provide dramatic surface color and underwater shade.

When browsing for plants, select a mixture of floating, submerged, bog and lilies/lotus, with the goal of covering about 60 percent of your water's surface. A sample plant shopping list for a 50-square-foot pond looks something like this:

- 6 to 12 floating plants
- Several submerged plants
- 2 bog plants
- 1 water lily

Don't forget to add **aquatic plant media**, fertilizer and containers, like pots, **plant bags**, **planting baskets** and **floating planters**, to your list. You'll need them when you transplant and care for the new greenery. Speaking of which ...

Planting How-To

Once you've planned out and purchased your plants, it's time to move them in to your water garden. The different types of aquatic plants need to be handled differently:

Floating Plants: Simply place these easy-care plants in the water. They will float freely and take up nutrients through their root systems. **Caution:** if you have a skimmer, you will need to anchor the floating plants or they will end up in the skimmer!!

Submerged Plants: Grow these underwater plants in plant bags or other planters. Fill your container with planting material, plant several bunches of them together and submerge into the desired section of your

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pond. Another option: Tie a bunch to a weight and drop it into the pond, using one bunch for every 2 square feet of surface area. Their roots will take up nutrients from the water.

Bog Plants: Best grown in containers filled with aquatic plant media, bog plants like their roots wet. Position them around the edges of your pond in 6-inch-deep water, or inside your pond with a floating island planter.

Water Lilies and Lotus: These beauties thrive in pots, like those found in our [Water Lily and Water Lotus Planting Kits](#). To transplant, fill your tub with clay and a clay/soil mix, and add some aquatic planting media on top. Position the tuber inside the soil with the growing tip pointed up. Submerge the pot so the plant's tip is 3 to 6 inches deep. Once the plant starts to grow and its leaves reach the water's surface, place the pot in a deeper area of your pond.

Feed for Healthy Growth

Your newly planted plants will need nutrients for beautiful blooms, so don't forget the fertilizer!

Tabs, like [CrystalClear® Thrive™](#), feed aquatic plants throughout their growing season. The balanced nutrients in tabs encourage greenery and bloom production and should be added to the soil every 2-4 weeks for best results. Use one tablet to two tablets per gallon of potting soil, and push it deep into the media 3 inches from the crown of the plant. Pack the hole with dirt to prevent the fertilizer from being released into the water, and you're good until next month.



Plant Maintenance - Season by Season



When leaves turn yellow or brown, it's time to cut them off and remove from the pond.

Just like your car, regularly scheduled maintenance will keep your plants in top performance. From start up to shut down, we have tips to help you check off your to-do list.

Divvy in Spring

When the ice starts to melt, it means that spring is just around the corner. Start the pond season off by thawing your green

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thumb and dividing your aquatic plants so they have some room to stretch their roots. In general, **bog plants** should be divided every one to two years; **water lilies** and **lotus** are usually divided every two to three years. Below is a simplified how-to guide, so grab your pruning tools, gloves, extra planting bags, planting media, and garden hose and let's get to work!

Bog Plants

Bog plants include species like Corkscrew Rush, Dwarf Cattail, and Blue Flag Iris. These types of plants have clumping roots, runners, or rhizomes and the dividing process will vary slightly based on which type of root mass the plant has. Here's what to do:

Lift the pot out of the water and gently remove the root mass.

Wash the soil off the mass with your hose and trim any dead foliage.

Divide the root mass depending on the type of root system. For plants with clumping roots like corkscrew rush, separate the roots into sections with some roots intact in each section. Dwarf cattails have runners, so cut the runner and leave the root base with each section of the plant. For rhizome plants like irises, simply divide them into sections.

Replant each section in its own container and dispose of any overgrowth.

Water Lilies & Lotus

Lilies – both **tropical and hardy** varieties – and water lotus are also relatively easy to divide. These plants have a tuber root system, similar to a potato. You will know that it is time for the tubers to go their separate ways when you notice fewer pads, reduced blooms, or splitting pots.

Lift the container out of the water, locate the tuber and gently remove it.

Rinse off the soil and trim any root growth or dead leaves.

Identify the crowns, or buds where the pad will sprout, and cut between them with a sharp knife. These sections will become a new plant, so you will want each piece to be 3"-4" in length.

Plant each section separately at a 45-degree angle with the growing tip exposed above the planting media.

Place your repotted plants in a shallow area with 3"-6" of water above the growing tip.

After the leaves are above water, you can move the plant deeper.

Fertilize & Tend Through Summer

Ensure your plants are getting the nutrients they need to produce vigorous blooms by adding **fertilizer tablets** every two weeks during the growing season. To keep your colorful beauties looking their best, regularly remove any dead foliage. Lastly, don't forget to enjoy your water garden!

Bring on the Winter Chill

As the temperatures cool and you shut down your pond, you will want to give your plants some final attention. If you live in a frost-free zone, congratulations, all you need to do is follow your summer routine. But for those who get a bit frosty, below are a few pointers to help you prepare your plants for the winter ahead.

Know your Zone: Like terrestrial plants, aquatic plants are sensitive to varying temperatures. The **USDA Hardiness Zone Map** is based on the average minimum winter temperature and is the basis for determining which plants will thrive in a particular location. Start by identifying

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which plants are and aren't in your zone.
What to Do:

Hardy Plants: Hardy water lilies, submerged plants, and other plants geared for your hardiness zone are pretty easy to winterize. Remove the foliage after the first hard frost, then gently sink your hardy plants to the deepest part of the pond and they will go dormant until spring. For bog plants, bring them back up as soon as the ice permanently thaws so they can keep growing.

Floating Plants: Floating plants are most susceptible to frost. It is best to treat them like annuals and discard them after the first frost. Luckily they are inexpensive to replace and will quickly grow when added in spring.

Tropical Bulbs: Lilies, canna, and other plants with bulbs or tubers that prefer temperatures above your climate should take a winter vacation from your water garden. These plants can either become dormant or you can try your hand at growing them indoors.

Tropical Bog Plants: The Yellow Snowflake – ironically not tolerant of snow – and other tropical bog plants can be treated as annuals or you can bring them inside to test your gardening skills. If you decide to try wintering these plants inside, you will want to keep them wet, but standing water is not needed. Keep in mind that with the shorter days you will likely need to provide supplemental light so they can get their 10-14 hours.

Taking year round care of your plants will ensure they last through the season and over the years!



This from Texas Invasive I-Wire March 2020

Invasive Spotlight:

Cuban Tree Frog
(*Osteopilus septentrionalis*)



Note large toe pads. Credit: Leanna Powers



Example of color variation. Note large toe pads and rough skin on the back, Credit: Denise Gregoire, U.S. Geological Survey

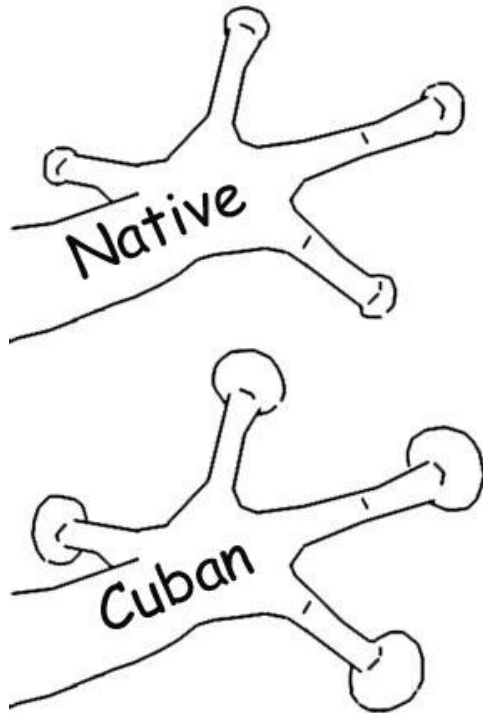
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Source: Comparison between the size of toe pads of native tree frogs and the Cuban tree frog. Credit: Monica McGaritty, TPWD

The following information is modified from the University of Florida Extension Wildlife webpage on the Cuban treefrog.

The largest tree frog in North America is the Cuban tree frog (1.5 to 5 inches in body length), but it is not native to North America. It causes ecological problems as a predator of a wide range of native frogs, toads, and lizards, in addition to insects and spiders. This species was introduced to southern Florida from the Caribbean and has continued to spread. There is a breeding population in New Orleans, and they have been found in Texas! It is very important that those of you in the Houston area and along the coast from the Texas-Louisiana border to past Galveston keep an eye and ear out for these frogs.

Description: The distinguishing characteristics of the Cuban tree frog are:

- Size of the adults (up to 5 inches in body length, much larger than native Texas tree frogs);
 - Enormous toe pads (larger than toe pads of native tree frogs in Texas), as large as its eardrum;
 - Bumpy skin on the back, like skin of a toad; and
 - Skin on top of head is fused to skull.
- A good test to determine if a frog is a Cuban tree frog is to grasp the frog firmly, but gently, and try to move the skin around on the top of the frog's head with your fingertip. Because the skin on the head of a Cuban tree frog is fused to the top of the skull, it won't move.

Cuban tree frogs can be highly variable in color — from pale tan/pale green without any markings to dark green or brown with an even darker color pattern on the back and legs. Sometimes they almost look white when they are inactive or cold. The Florida Extension Wildlife page on the Cuban treefrog has photos that illustrate this variability.

Wear gloves or put your hand in a plastic bag when handling the Cuban tree frog. They secrete a slimy film to protect their skin, which can irritate the skin and eyes of some people.

Habitat: This species prefers habitat that is moist and shady — in trees, shrubs or around houses. It is commonly found near ornamental fishponds and well-lit patios.

Reproduction: The breeding season lasts from May to October. The voice, or call, of

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the Cuban tree frog is variably pitched, slightly rasping or like grating stone.

To listen to the call of the Cuban tree frog, click [HERE](#) and select "Cuban tree frog" from the dropdown list for Common Name, and click on the "submit" button.

Here is a flyer from Louisiana describing the Cuban treefrog. An excellent, extensive and informative web page from Louisiana is [here](#).

If you think you found a Cuban tree frog, please collect it if possible (using gloves) and report it to the USGS and to texasinvasives.org (put "Cuban tree frog" in the subject line, take up to 4 photos to submit and/or include a description, and include the location.



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