

# Ponderings...

Newsletter of the Central Iowa Water Garden Association    www.ciwga.org    vol. 3 no. 3 March 2003



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## Lilypad

Our next meeting is Monday, March 10, at 7:00 pm. Dr. Charlie Drewes will present on "Maintaining a Healthy Environment in Our Ponds For Our Critters." The program will be at the Alliant Facility in West Ames. A map is included in this newsletter. The Board of Directors will meet prior to this meeting at 6:00 pm at the Alliant Facility. Hospitality: Weldon and Pam Abarr, Lisa Harmison.

## Ribbiting Report

We had a huge turnout for Deb Spencer's presentation last month. There were over 125 people that attended the event at Reiman Gardens. The room holds 150 so we could have squeezed a few more in. There were wall-to-wall water gardeners there -- all were excited about Deb's very informative and well-illustrated presentation. We have had great reviews of her talk. Deb has set the standard for future guest speakers.

I was able to spend the afternoon and a couple of hours after her talk, with Deb. She is really a delightful person and a wealth of knowledge that she is anxious for everybody to know. We were able to present to her, a well-organized and friendly CIWGA. Most of the Directors were able to have dinner with Deb before her presentation. We ate at Hickory Park and all had a good time. I do not think I could have been more proud of our organization that evening.

Now, to plan for another well-known pond expert as a guest speaker for next year. We are open for suggestions so if you know of someone that you want to learn from, let your Director's know. I do have some ideas but we need to hear from our membership for yours.

*continued on page 2...*



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# Ribbiting Report

...continued

Deb was very reasonable in her request of us as far as monetary compensation. She basically only asked for her expenses, which we would have paid for anyway. The Director' s decided to make sure she had really nice accommodations for the evening and we wanted to make sure that we laid out the red carpet for her. We decided to rent the Hughes auditorium at Reiman for the best possible facility to hold her presentation. The facility was excellent except for how cold the auditorium was. When the room filled up some of the chill was gone but it was still cool. I might mention that we had an anonymous donation of \$55 to help CIWGA in the expenses for the evening. This was very much appreciated.

We have set a precedent -- do you think we can do better next year?

On to the next subject -- I was talking with Gus Archeska, who lives at Bethany Manor, and he really likes the water garden that we installed. I found out that he is a member of our Association. Gus is a friend of my Mom' s and when we were visiting him, he told me that he reads our newsletter from cover to cover. It is something that he looks forward to. Knowing this -- it really puts pressure on us to keep up the job of putting together a good newsletter -- right Gus!!

Gus mentioned that he wanted to donate a net for the Bethany Manor pond so that we can keep the leaves out. He said that it is amazing how many leaves get into their pond even though it is in a courtyard with no significant trees in it. Gus is concerned about the quality of the water and feels that a net would help. Thanks Gus!

To introduce the program presenter for our March meeting, I will do this with one of his worm limericks:

There once were some worms in a tank  
That suddenly got very rank  
Overfed with fish food  
They became very rude  
Refusing to swim, they just sank.

This is a Dr. Charlie Drewes limerick and it is just an introduction to the subject that he is going

to be presenting to us on Monday, March 10. Charlie presented to us last year and was very well received -- very witty guy and is crazy about aquatic invertebrates. Charlie is going to be presenting a program on Maintaining a Healthy Environment in Our Ponds For Our Critters. He also will be talking about techniques of sampling small invertebrates in ponds. He has a very interesting gadget called a Portascope that he invented so that, with a small investment, you can actually see the critters that make up our Patina that I am always talking about. Charlie says "his Portascope is to a microscope what a portapotty is to a restroom". :-) This is classic Charlie!!

I asked Charlie to bring a few of the Portascopes so that we will have some on hand to those that want one. He will need \$35 to cover the materials and labor that he has in making these really ingenious devices. You can check one out on his web site. That is [www.zool.iastate.edu/~c\\_drewes/portascope.htm](http://www.zool.iastate.edu/~c_drewes/portascope.htm) I bought one and am very impressed with the design, as well as the simplicity of it.

The meeting will be at the Alliant facility and start promptly at 7:00 PM with Dr. Drewes presentation. Our business meeting will follow. I would like the Director' s to meet at 6:00 immediately before our 7:00 meeting start.

See everybody there.

The Big Toad, Jamie



If you have paid your dues, *and* you have not received your type written (not hand written temporary card) please contact Greg Knop.

## Fountains of Support

You must show your current CIWGA membership card to receive the discount.

**Ames Landscape and Nursery**, 4320 Hwy 69 South, Ames, 515-232-2840 -- 10% discount.



**Ark Pet Center**, 118 Hayward Avenue, Ames, 515-292-4646 -- Card-carrying members have monthly specials in addition to 10% discount on everything else.

**Aqualand**, 3600 6th Avenue (6th and Euclid), Des Moines, 515-283-0300 -- All members receive a 10% discount.

**Dillon Plant Company**, Craig Jacobson, 2554 Dillon Road, Marshalltown, 641-479-2632 -- Dwarf conifers, hostas, daylilies, ornamental grasses. Open by appointment.

**Earl May Garden Center**, 1601 S. Kellogg, Ames, 515-232-2929 -- Everything 10% discount except for the dog and cat food plus monthly in-store specials for an additional discount.

*New!* **Holub's Garden Center**, 22085 580th Ave., Ames, 515-232-4769 -- 10% discount not valid with other discounts.

**Iowa Outdoor Products**, 3200 86th Street, Des Moines -- Everything 10% discount.

*New!* **K & K Gardens**, 108 E. Wilbur St., Hawkeye, 52147, 563-427-5373, www.kkgardens.com -- Open May through July, all members receive a 10% discount.

**Lowes Garden Center**, 120 Airport Road, Ames, 515-233-0404 -- All pond and landscaping products 10% discount.

**Quick's Hardware Hank**, 502 East 1st Street at the Corner of Hwy 69 and 1st Str, Huxley, 515-597-2338 -- 10% discount all garden things except items on sale/specials to members with card.

*New!* **Scales & Tails**, Mike Roe, 518 Central Ave., Fort Dodge, 50501, 515-573-4911 -- 10% discount on any pond related item.

**Skycrest Gardens**, 243 Dave Circle, Ames, 515-233-1382 -- Almost everything 10% discount.

**Struther's Trees and Outdoor Store**, 2908 NE 94th Ave., Ankeny (1 mile east of I-35 exit 92), 515-964-5145 -- 10% discount.

**Willowglen Nursery**, Lindsay Lee and E. Lee Zieke Lee, 3512 Lost Mile Road, Decorah, Iowa 52101 -- Card-carrying members have 10% discount on water plants.

## Turtle's Tanks

The CIWGA Turtle extends a big thank you to the following individuals and organizations that have helped our group:

Skycrest Garden

The Ark Pet Center

Copyworks of Ames

Deb Spencer

Linda Carson, Sandy Gossman, Lisa Harmon, Ken Walters, and Diane Wilson for docenting in the Reiman Gardens Conservatory last month

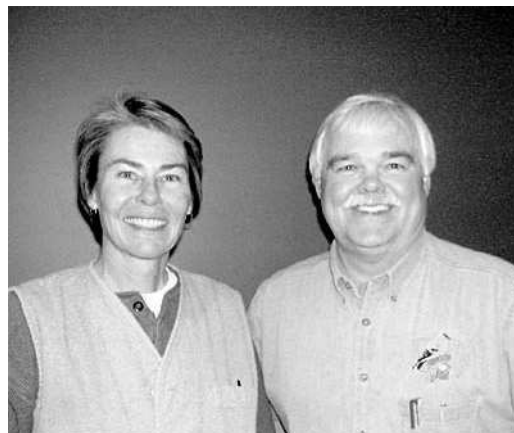
The Hotel at Gateway Center

Reiman Gardens



## Deb Spencer and the Big Toad

Photograph by Gretchen Triplett



# Chapter Channels

## Polk County

The Polk County Chapter of the CIWGA will hold its meetings at 7:00 pm, at the ISU Extension Office, 5201 NE 14Th St., Des Moines. Coming meetings for the group will be: March 26 and April 29 programs to be announced but hopefully one of these will be on waterfall construction; and in May we will attend the Ames group' s plant sale.

## Top of Iowa

The ISU Extension Office in Mason City was the meeting place for our February 17, 2003 Top of Iowa Water Garden meeting.

President Ed Schroeder opened the meeting for business. There was no treasurer' s report and previous minutes were not read.

Under Old Business Ed stated that Deb Spencer gave a great presentation on Aquatic Plants at the February 10 CIWGA meeting.

Bart Pals said he could get a 40% discount from Lilly Blooms if we sent in a group order. Ed stated the CIWGA organization supported ordering from a local dealer, and that Debbie was still trying to contact Happy Acres in Osage to see if we could order in bulk from that nursery.

We talked about the difficulty of finding presenters. It was suggested we ask speakers to narrow their topics and perhaps this would allow the same speaker to return to present a different program while not overwhelming us with too much information at one time. There was also discussion on how long a program should be.

The majority of the evening was spent discussing this years meeting dates, programs, locations and fundraising. We talked the possibility of having a meeting and taking a tour in the same month, or foregoing the meeting and just taking a tour. Possible programs were discussed. Mary will check about having someone speak on bogs. Logan stated he would like to hear someone speak on Koi.

Fund raising ideas included having a plant and/or fish sale, making and selling veggie filters, and

hosting a pond tour. During our April meeting, we will make veggie filters for our own use and to sell. Specific details will be in next month' s newsletter. In May we plan on hosting a plant/fish sale and in July, Ed stated he would like to see our club have their first pond tour.

Programs for this year:

- March -- Central Gardens
- April -- Making Veggie Filters
- May -- Plant and/or Fish Sale
- June -- Tour Stan Fitz Gardens
- July -- Top of Iowa Water Garden Pond Tour
- August -- Open
- September -- 7B Ranch

New business brought the subject of working with other organizations as a means of promoting our club. Julie Wright, chairperson for Central Gardens in Clear Lake, will be presenting next month, and it was suggested we may be able to help them establishing a water feature.

Our next meeting will be at the Lakeside Room in Clear Lake on March 17 at 7:00 p.m. Julie Wright' s program on Central Gardens will delight us all. Ed stated he and Cathy will call or send postcards to people who have expressed an interest in water gardens, or have attended one of our meetings, but are not yet members. He encouraged everyone to attend next month' s meeting.

We hope to see you there. As always, please call or e-mail Ed Schroeder if you have any questions, or are interested in joining us, 641-923-3512 or [krafty@ncn.net](mailto:krafty@ncn.net).

Submitted by Mary Schultz, secretary



# Water Feature

## *Bananas, Bamboos, Orchids, and Other Tropicals in the Midwest? You Bet Your Sweet Asters, Petunia!*

By Kenn Outzen

There have been several people asking about our "tropical" feeling garden. So I thought I would tell you about the concepts and about some of the plants to achieve the look.

Like all aspects of gardening, it starts with soil prep. And what is the soil in the tropics like? It is very high in organic material. Therefore, it is very moisture retentive and well drained at the same time. I know that sounds rather contradictory but until the floor litter of boughs and twigs break down completely into the soil, they are well drained and moisture retentive.

By using this theory, we feel we can plant some things that are marginal. Because the soil is so well drained, the root system is not encased in a tight ice mass. Unless, of course, we have a very wet late fall. We have had many zone 6 and 7 plants winter over. When we have lost them is during times in the spring when the topsoil has thawed but the lower subsoil is still frozen. With the subsoil frozen and early rains or fast snow thaw, the water has no way to move out of the topsoil and it turns into that killing ice mass.

Well, now that you have gotten your soil conditions taken care of and Mother Nature under control, you are ready for plants. Dean has made a list of tropical-looking plants that is included at the end of this article.

Tropicals do require a lot of water so we water almost daily and feed once a week with a hose end sprayer and a general purpose fertilizer. The plants that require a special fertilizer get a slow release fertilizer to fill their needs at planting and one other time later in the growing season.

What does it take to create the look and feel of a tropical garden? It takes texture and color. Texture is in leaf size,

shape, and color. A texture in a form such as large, dark, shiny, green leaf planted with smaller, yellow, leaves gives the garden interesting color contrast and texture. An example would be the broad, solid leaves of a canna planted with bamboo or some of the small leafed spirea. Hosta is a great plant to use in mass as a tropical looking plant with the finer leaves of a Japanese maple.

Another way to achieve the look is over planting. The tropics are not a neat place. There are large masses of everything just as nature planted it. Make your mass plantings overlap and blend into each other. This is where using masses of hosta interplanted with other plants of contrasting leaf size, shape and color can give you the look and feel of the tropics.

Foliage color is also a big part of the tropical look. Mixing the subtle shades of green alone can give depth to your planting. Then, if you mix shades of yellow or white to that same planting, it will bring a brightness or glow and liven things up. Splashes of color can be added with red or orange leaved plants. Mass together the yellow and white varieties of Iris with their vertical shape with Purple Palace Coral Bells with their horizontal shape. The contrast of color and shape will be an outstanding focal point at the corner of a path or along side a pond.

I've not mentioned much about blooms. It has been my experience that the eye stays at or stays focused on light colors. Plant them in the background so that the eye can better pick up on the other bloom colors in the garden.

So what are some of the things that it takes to have a tropical garden? Good soil preparation, a good watering and fertilizing schedule. To achieve the look and feel of the tropics, have mass plantings of many different sizes and shapes of plants, adding color through the use of variegated foliage, all with a dappling of bold colored blooms.

This is a rather short overview of gardening for the tropical look and feel in the Midwest. More articles on this subject to follow.



# Hardy Plants for the Tropical Look

By Dean Koob

*Streilesis aconitifolia*, shredded umbrella plant, 15" tall, light shade to shade

*Petasites japonicus* ' Gigantus' , green leaves, and *Petasites japonicus* ' Variegated' , green and yellow leaves, both 3 ft. tall, leaves up to 4 ft across, blooms in spring before it leafs out, does best in shade

*Damera peltata*, 3-4 ft tall, maybe taller, 2-4 ft leaves

*Astilboides tabularis*, partial shade, 3 ft. tall, 2 ft. leaves, astible-like plumes in July

*Aralia elata* ' Aureovariegata' and ' Variegata' , shrubs

Bamboos - height probably lower here, cold hardy to temperature listed.

Spreading:

*Phyllostachys nigra*, black bamboo, 25' , ♂

*P. nigra* Henon, 40' , -10

*P. nuda*, 20-35' , -20

*P. aureosulcata*, 20-25' , -20

*P. aurea*, golden bamboo, 15-20' , ♂

Clumping:

*Fargesia nitida*, 12' , -20

*F. muriale*, bamboo that pandas, eat, 12' , -20

*F. dracocephala*, 15' , -10

*Chusquea cuelo*, 15-20' , ♂

*Rogersia*, several varieties, 3 ft and up

*Ligularias*, several varieties with big serrated leaves, tall spires of small yellow flowers, some have orange daisy-like flowers

*Angelica* ' Gigi' , up to 6' tall, maroon sedum-like blooms in summer

# A Stone's Throw

## For Newsletter Articles:

You can contact us by e-mail at news@ciwga.org or by postal mail at CIWGA, c/o Lisa Harmison, 2042 South 500th Avenue, Ames, IA 50014. Material (written stories and photographs) sent by regular mail will be returned.

**Deadline for April issue is March 20.**

## Upcoming Events

**March 17** - Top of Iowa Meeting, please see *Channels* for more information

**March 26** - Polk Chapter Meeting, please see *Channels* for more information

**April 14** - CIWGA Meeting, details TBA

## Thank you

For the wonderful presentation at Reiman Gardens by Deb Spencer!! It was a real mid-Winter treat! Thanks so much to all who were involved doing the planning & implementation.

Patti & Rollie Knight

## More limericks by Dr. Charlie Drewes

### Anhydrobiosis

In the mosses we find water bear,  
All dried up, but they don' t seem to care.  
Now, add water and see  
They' ll emerge from debris.  
Of the tardigrades you should beware!

### Escape Artist

On carapace, claw, and maxilliped  
A hard chitin coat, from tail to the head.  
How do crayfish, you ask,  
Take off their old mask?  
New armor once grown, the old armor' s shed!

## Catch Basin

Committee Descriptions and Volunteers - if you see something you want to serve on, please contact Jamie.

Community Service Committee-- Is responsible for organizing community service projects. We will be asking all the members to help actually do the work.

Program Book Committee -- Will be responsible for collating the information for the program book and distributing it. They will not be responsible for organizing the programs or finding committee members. The job will be to collect all the info from various officers and committees and then collate it.

Commercial Relations -- Is responsible for establishing and maintaining our relationship with retailers who are giving our Association members 10% Discounts.

Hospitality Committee -- Will arrange for our meeting locations, help set up and tear down the meeting room, coordinate the refreshment volunteers, and handle the door prizes.

Writing Committee -- Will do the core of the writing for the newsletter along with other volunteers.

Water Garden Tour Committee -- Will coordinate and conduct our Annual Water Garden Tour held in July.

Publicity Committee -- Will be responsible for making sure our organization gets publicity for meetings and activities.

Recognition Committee -- Will send thank yous to presenters, business sponsors in a timely fashion and will also recognize volunteers within the organization during our Holiday Meeting in December.

Plant Exchange Committee -- Will organize and set up our annual plant exchange that is conducted during our May meeting.

## New on the Website

By Lisa Harmison

On our website is a listing of articles from back issues of our newsletter (*Frog Files* link off our homepage [www.ciwga.org](http://www.ciwga.org)). If you do not have Internet access but would like a copy of one of these, please let me know and I'll send you one.

Aphids!

Autumn and the Pond

Beginning Ponding

Building an In-ground Water Feature - Lessons Learned

Can I Add Fish?

Dividing Perennials for the Plant Exchange

General Water Lily Care

Goldfish, Shubunkin, and Koi

Hydrogen Peroxide and Algae

Insects: The Water Garden's Unexpected Guests

Quarantining New Fish

Sublimation

Summer Maintenance Tips

Warm Enough for Lilies?

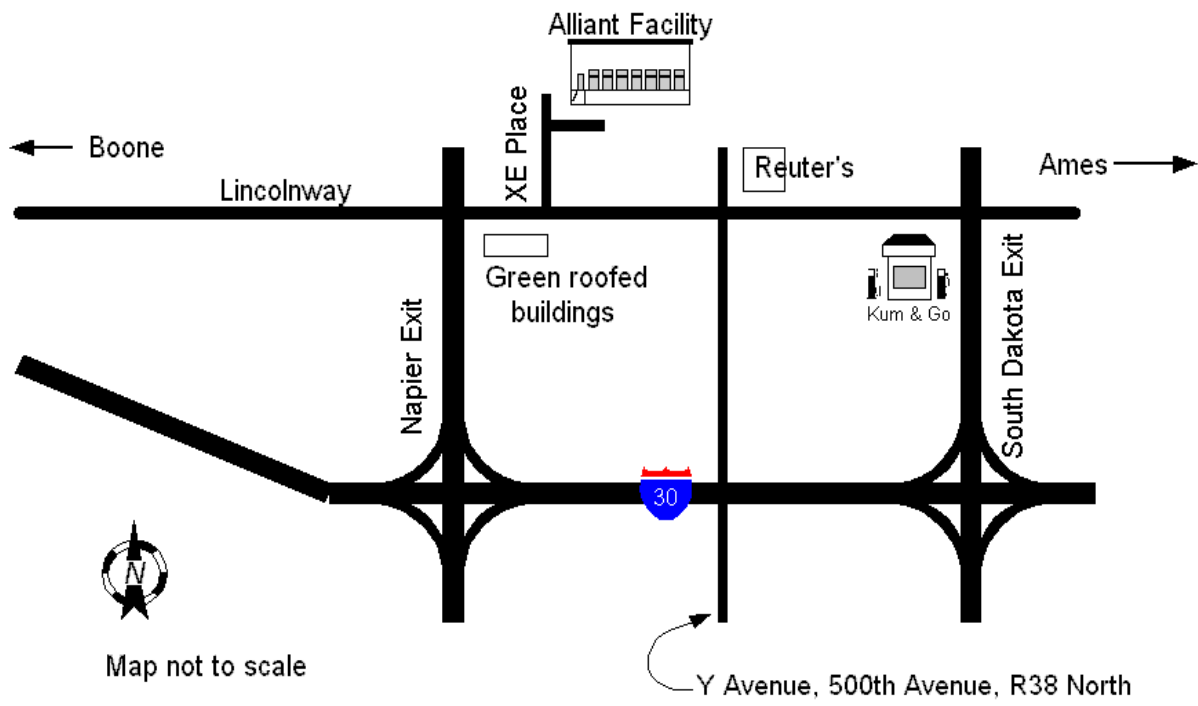
Water Fountain Bird Bath

What's Wrong with my Pump?

Winterizing Water Gardens in the Midwest

Also new are pictures from Bill Boon. He attended the recent Home and Garden Show in Des Moines and shares pictures from the display provided by Country Landscapes. These photographs can be found in *Guppy's Gallery* off our homepage.





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