



September newsletter

Dear Ponders,

How can summer be over? It's been a wonderful year, and we've really appreciated each of our meetings. It's been so fun to be back socializing in one another's yards and hearing from great and informative speakers.

Last night was no exception. We enjoyed a dinner from Café Rio, and then Craig Larsen shared his methods for spawning and raising beautiful koi. Thanks to Craig and Claudia for hosting and sharing their beautiful yard and three ponds. It was a great way to end our summer outdoor meetings for the year.

On October 26, we'll have our end-of-year banquet at Toscano. You'll find details on page for 2. Get your tickets now by scanning the QR code. We need to turn in numbers to the restaurant soon, and don't want you to miss out on a delightful \$50 dinner. Club member cost is only \$20 per person; the club is paying the difference.

Keep reading for tips on preparing your ponds for winter, and information on one of Utah's newest denizens — the fox squirrel.

Please consider getting more involved in the club. We need help with committees, hosts for 2024 meetings, and yards for our 2024 pond tour. The club can only continue with your help! We'll have sign-up sheets at the banquet. You can also contact any club officer or director (contact info in on the last page).

Thanks all! We look forward to seeing you at our closing banquet on October 26 at Toscano.



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October End-of-Season Banquet

TOSCANO

THE SOUTH VALLEY'S FINEST DINING EXPERIENCE

toscano-restaurant.com

Our annual end-of-season banquet will be on Thursday, October 26 at Toscano, which is located in Draper at the 11400 South off ramp of I-15. The cost is \$20 for members and \$50 for non-members. Plan now to join us in a fine dining experience, together with a silent auction. For a menu, more info and tickets, scan this QR code:



Fox Squirrels

We keep several bird feeders in our yard, which also attract squirrels. Our sweet rescue dog hates them. She barks at them and chases them up the trees. So imagine our surprise last summer when we saw a large squirrel stand up to her! The squirrel stood up on its back legs, raised its front legs high into the air, puffed out its chest and moved aggressively toward the dog. The dog sat confused for a couple of minutes, and then turned and went back into the house.

Curious, we began researching squirrels and learned that this encounter was with a fox squirrel. These squirrels (*Sciurus niger*) are not native to Utah. In fact,



learnaboutnature.com

they did not live in Utah at all until roughly seven years ago, when they were first spotted along the Jordan River. These rodents are now ubiquitous in parts of the Salt Lake Valley, more numerous than any other species of squirrel, and they're causing problems for many.

They steal birdseed and munch on crops. They harass dogs, cats and people alike. They chew through wood, wiring, insulation and other materials, in some cases causing power outages, as their population has boomed into the tens of thousands.

If there were an index that ranked the cuteness and fuzziness of Utah mammals, Fox squirrels would rank

highly on it. They are longer and plumper than Utah-native squirrels, with a coat that washes from a creamy underbelly into a grey-brown speckle along their back, and nutmeg red at the fringes.

The squirrel earns its likeness to a fox because of its tail, which plumes and curls back against its body in a fluffy firework the color of autumn.

While the fox squirrel is not native to the western United States, it has naturalized here over the last hundred years or so.

The legend goes that veterans from the Civil War and World War I travelled from all parts of the country to a Los Angeles veteran's hospital. To make them feel more at home, they brought these fluffy red squirrels along with them (often as pets, and even as ingredients for Burgoo Stew—a depression-era meal made from whatever ingredients were available).



(Francisco Kjolseth, The Salt Lake Tribune)

Loving the southern California habitat, the fox squirrel flourished. Then, both by human introduction and their own migration over trees and power lines, they spread across the western United States.

For over a century, Utah remained outside the fox squirrel's path. But in 2011 they were sighted in Utah

for the first time along the Jordan River Parkway. And in the few years since, they have spread rapidly throughout the Salt Lake Valley and beyond.

“They definitely have a foothold,” said Eric Rickart, Natural History Museum of Utah Curator of Vertebrate Zoology. “In fact, it's probably at the point now that it would be impossible to stop them. The question is how far they're going to expand.”

While the fox squirrel naturalized in California and other western states, it did not come without competition. In California, fox squirrels entered territory occupied by other native animals, namely the western grey squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*).

Smaller in size, though not dwarfed by their foxy counterpart, the grey squirrel has been forced into

climbing, unlike fox squirrels. And American reds are specialists in that they mostly eat the seeds of conifer



(nmhu.utah.edu)

trees, which grow most commonly outside urban areas. Fox squirrels are generalists in their ability to eat a variety of different foods.

“It will be interesting to see how far east and how far upslope the fox squirrels go,” mused Rickart. “And how they spread along the Wasatch Front, and whether or not they can cross large areas that don't have trees.”

Adapted from nmhu.utah.edu and The Salt Lake Tribune, January 28, 2023



(Francisco Kjolseth, The Salt Lake Tribune)

the foothills and less urban areas of a habitat now shared with fox squirrels.

Rickart doesn't believe the same sort of competition will occur in Utah, however. The area that fox squirrels have invaded is shared by two Utah-native squirrel species—the rock squirrel, and the American red squirrel. While these three squirrel species now share the same region, they occupy different niches within it.

Where fox squirrels have a relative tolerance to high-traffic, urban areas, both rock squirrels and American red squirrels are more averse to those environments. The rock squirrel also favors burrowing to tree-

Tips for Fall Pond Care

Fall pond maintenance is mostly about cleaning your pond so it keeps working well to stay beautiful. Fall pond care involves cleaning out leaves and debris, trimming foliage, making sure each part works, and installing netting to catch dead leaves. The netting helps keep your pond clean, making winter maintenance easier.

Here are some steps you may want to take:

Step 1: Prepare for Shutdown

Once all the leaves have fallen, begin your fall pond care by removing any netting. Pond netting should be stored indoors to keep it safe from wear and tear due to heavy snowfall and ice.

Next, access your pump and filter for cleaning and storage. For ponds with waterfalls and skimmers, disconnect your pump and check valve, and allow the water to drain from your plumbing and waterfall.

For ponds with in-pond filtration or filters containing UV or ion clarifiers, disconnect them from the plumbing and drain out the water.

Step 2: Lower the Pond's Water Level

Now that your filtration system and pump have been disconnected, use a submersible pump and drain hose to lower the pond level below the opening of the skimmer.

Next, winterize your pond waterfall or skimmer box by pumping out the water. While it is not necessary to remove them from the pond, water should be drained from them to prevent cracking as the water freezes and thaws throughout winter.

For ponds that do not contain skimmers, it's not necessary to lower the water level in your pond.

Step 3: Clean Filters, Media, and Pump

Filter Media

First, wash the filter pads, bio balls or other media located in your skimmer, waterfall box, pressurized filter, and/or in-pond filter. Filter media may be stored in the waterfall box or skimmer or kept inside for the winter.

If any of the media looks worn or torn, start a list for items to be replaced during spring start-up.

UV Clarifiers

For UV clarifiers, disassemble the unit and clean the quartz sleeve with a soft cloth and a descaler such as white vinegar.

A UV bulb's effectiveness degrades over time and should be replaced after each season. You may choose to replace the UV bulb in preparation, or you can add this task to your spring checklist.

Pump

Now it's time for your pump. Clean excess debris off your pump, then inspect it for wear and tear or any damage like worn impellers.

When storing your pump and preparing your pond for the winter, you may want to place it in a bucket of water to prevent the seals in the pump from drying and cracking during storage. Keep the pump, in-pond filters, and UV clarifiers in a location that will not freeze, like your basement.

Step 4 - Trim Back Aquatic Plants

As winter approaches, plants will naturally fall into a dormant state. To winterize hardy plants, use your pruning tools to trim off dead foliage just above the soil.

If your plants are in pots, move the pots to the pond's bottom to protect the roots from freezing temperatures. Tropical water lilies, floating plants, or other temperature sensitive varieties will either need to be discarded or brought indoors.

Step 5 - Remove Excess Debris

Rotting leaves, twigs, or dead aquatic plants will put stress on your pond's oxygen levels throughout the winter, which puts your fish at risk. Remove leaves and debris from ponds and streams with the help of a hand net. If you have hard to reach small debris, use a vacuum to make cleanup easier.

Step 6 - Install Aeration & De-Icer

Aeration and de-icers help to keep a hole open in the ice during winter months. This prevents harmful gases from being trapped under the ice and allows oxygen levels to stay saturated in the pond.

If you don't have one, we recommend installing an aeration in the shallow area of your pond. If you already have one installed, simply relocate air stones

or diffusers to the shallower part of the pond. This will leave an undisturbed area at the bottom of your pond for your fish to gather for the winter. For added protection, consider installing a pond heater to ensure a hole stays open in the ice.

Step 7 - Switch to Wheatgerm Fish Food

If you haven't already, switch your fish to a wheatgerm-based diet. Wheatgerm food is easier to digest in cooler temperatures and will sustain your fish until they are dormant.

When water temperatures fall below 50°F, reduce feedings to three times per week and only feed your fish what they can consume in a five minute period. Once water temperatures drop below 40°F, stop feeding your fish entirely until spring.

Step 8 - Install Nets

Again, consider netting your pond to keep leaves and debris from falling into your pond.

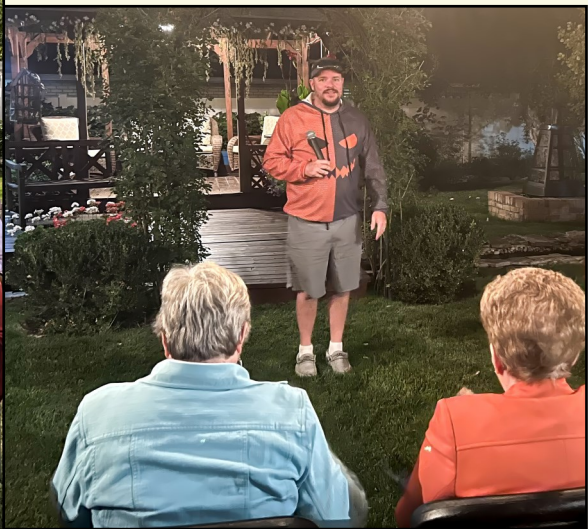
Adapted from thepondguy.com



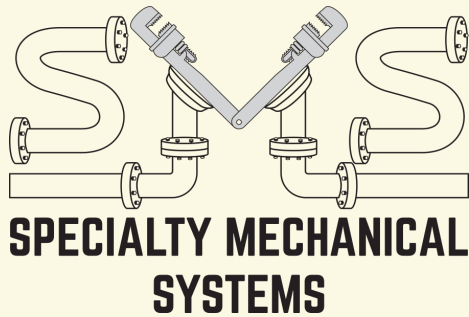
Our September Meeting

A big thanks to the Larsens for hosting our September meeting, and to everyone who came out. And a special thanks to Craig Larsen for sharing his expertise and experience with koi ponds and breeding koi. A great meeting to end the 2023 season!





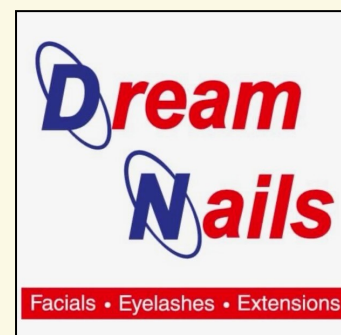
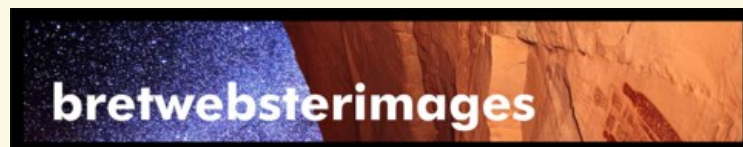
Thank you sponsors!



Draper Location



Thank you sponsors!





Utah Water Garden & Koi Club

Who we are

The Utah Water Garden & Koi Club is a non-profit organization serving the greater Wasatch Front. We strive to foster an appreciation for and interest in the use of water in the landscape, through monthly meetings, educational programs, pond tours, and sharing our experiences. We are a group of volunteers dedicated to water gardening, pond keeping, koi and other pond fish. Our members range from novices to commercial professionals.

Historically, we have sponsored an annual Water Garden Tour – a self-guided tour of outstanding local ponds, water features and gardens. Beginning this year, we've moved to a biennial (every other year) tour. If you'd like to be involved in planning or be on the 2024 tour, please let us know! Future tours can only happen with your participation!

Check out the Club's website at UtahWaterGardenClub.org.

Officers

President: Daniel Peel
435-660-0784
danielpeel@me.com

Vice-President: Kelly Flint
801-680-3040
kflint3040@msn.com

Secretary: Zoe Godbois
435-623-5100
zoecast@gmail.com

Treasurer: Lewis Wayman
801-916-2500
Lewwayman@gmail.com



Call Lewis Wayman at
801-916-2500

Board of Directors

Ty Rosser
801-995-8521
ty@utahlights.com

Gil Avellar
801-572-0853
trout42@hotmail.com

Michael Pfafflin
801-652-0386
michaelpfafflin@mac.com

Richard Cobbley
Past President
801-641-0179



We need hosts for our 2024 meetings, ponds for the 2024 pond tour, and volunteers to help with meetings and other events! Please help!