

# Utah Water Garden & Koi Club

February, 2019 Newsletter

## Welcome to the New Year!

Happy 2019 Ponders! We are looking forward to a fabulous year full of ponds, fish, watery critters, informative meetings, good times and a few surprises. Your officers and board members have worked very hard so far this year to recruit new sponsors, as well as re-sign last year's sponsors, to support our club's efforts. **Lewis Wayman** has been particularly successful at getting many new sponsors! We have had tremendous success increasing our sponsor list! Sponsor support will enable our club to provide outstanding events and educational opportunities as well as help us support the Utah Food Bank, a new community service project for our group.

The officers and board hope you are ready to shed the bonds of dreary winter for the tranquility and peace of your water gardens. Our Club is all about creating a family of individuals that share the common love of ponds, water gardens, fish, plants and all the beauty and intrigue this hobby has to offer! Whether you are brand new to water gardening and have a small water feature or you've had Koi for many years in your Jurassic 30,000-gallon Koi pond, we invite you to join us!

With monthly meetings and events, newsletters and emails, members are always informed of what's hot and new! Don't miss a meeting this year, you might miss something special! Our first meeting is scheduled for February 21st!

## Club Officers 2019

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February can be a tough month and thankfully it is only 28 days long. Here are some interesting February trivia facts to help you get through the month of February!

February is named after the purification ritual Februa, which was a sort of early Roman spring-cleaning festival.

In Old English, February was called Solmonath (Mud month) or Kale-monath (Kale or cabbage month).

February frequently occurs in lists of the most commonly misspelt words in the English language.

Much Ado About Nothing is the only Shakespeare play that mentions February.

Before Julius Caesar's calendar reform of 45BC, February was the only month with an even number of days. All the rest had 29 or 31.

February is the only month that can pass with no full moon.

In the USA, February is National Pet Dental Health month. It is also Hot Breakfast month.

The birthstone for February is amethyst. The birth flower is the violet or iris.

The ancient Greeks believed that amethyst protected the wearer from drunkenness.

**Don't forget Valentine's Day on February 14.**



But, most important – **February 17 is National Pancake Day!** Go have some flapjacks!





### February Meeting

February 21, 2019 7:00 pm

### Night of the Two Cans!

Bring in two cans of food for the food bank and get 1 extra raffle ticket!

Location: Cactus & Tropicals at 2735 S 2000 E  
Topic: Spring cleaning and preparing ponds for summer

Speaker: Sterling Herrmann

### March Meeting

March 21, 2019 7:00 pm

### Pastabilities to stamp out hunger!



Bring in any pasta item for the food bank and get 1 extra raffle ticket!

Topic: Introduction to Localscapes

Speaker: Cindy Bee-Utah Water Conservation Garden

Location to be announced

### April Meeting

April 18, 2019 7:00 pm

Red Butte Garden

Topic and Speaker: To be announced

### May Meeting

May 16, 2019 7:00 pm

Details Pending

### June Meeting

June 20, 2019 7:00 pm

Details Pending

### July Annual Club BBQ

July 18, 2019 7:00 pm

Details Pending

### August Pond Tour

August 10-11, 2019 (**Second** Weekend in August)

Annual Pond Tour

### August Meeting

August 15, 2019 7:00 pm

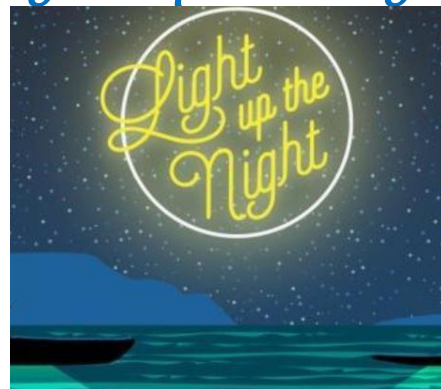
Details Pending

### September Special Event

September 7, 2019

Evening Pond Tour!

### Light Up the Night!



More details coming soon on this new, very special event!

### September Meeting

September 19, 2019 7:00 pm

Details Pending

### October

October 17, 2019 7:00 pm

Annual Banquet

Details Pending

## Fill the pond food drive

This year, our club is planning a year-long food drive in support of the Utah Food Bank. We encourage all members to bring items to our meetings and we will deliver them to the Food Bank. Cash donations are also most welcome. We feel it is critical to help our community feed hungry citizens, especially children.

Let's see how much we can collect by our October Banquet!



### Most needed food items:

- Peanut Butter
- Mac & Cheese
- Canned Meats (tuna, chicken or beef)
- Chili
- SpaghettiOs/Ravioli
- Canned Fruits and Veggies
- Rice, Pasta, Oatmeal
- Other Boxed Meals



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## Volunteer Opportunities in our Community

Murray Senior Center has advised us that they need help maintaining their small patio garden area this summer, 1-2 hours per week to weed and clean up spent flowers. One person doesn't have to do it all, we can tag team this effort. Some planting may be required with help from Murray City Parks Department. If you are interested, contact Sherry Avellar at [trout42@hotmail.com](mailto:trout42@hotmail.com). They are so grateful for help, please consider this opportunity!

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## Volunteers Needed to Support our Club

We are always looking for volunteers for the pond club! We use volunteers throughout the year, and for all different types of tasks. We guarantee a lot of fun and you will gain skills that you can put on your resume!!

If you would like to hold one of our monthly meetings to show off your pond, or submit your pond for the pond tour, please let one of the officers know! We'd love to have you!

## Down in the Garden with Rosie

By Rosie Cobbley



### Re-Designing your Front Landscape- Make it Functional and Beautiful

A New Year! Let's Take the Lawn Out!

We shoveled 10" of snow this morning- in past years I might have whined about it, but this year it's a celebration. SNOW! Like it or not, we have a desperate need for water this Summer, and we need that snowpack to grow.

We gardeners can help in many ways by thinking outside 'The Box' (that boring space that's the front lawn), and making changes so that we use our water wisely. Yes, we do need some Green in our lives, but let's put in round the back, where we really need it for recreation, for relaxing, entertaining, playing with the dog etc. etc. If you are having a heart attack about no lawn, then compromise, and reduce it to a very small portion of the Landscape. We live in a desert, so rolling green lawn belongs back in the Motherland (England) where it flourishes in constant downpours! I'm not advocating a bunch of Cactus and Rock (unless that's your ticket), but re-thinking how you create beauty in a non-lawn orientated front garden.

\* Park Strip- RIP YOUR STRIP! The very first way to reduce water, and once you've done it, you'll be

hooked! Use ground cover, grasses, low water or adapted perennials, flagstone, gravel, one or two larger, accent rocks, any combination of the above. Change out the sprinkler heads to a drip system, so you only water the plants, not the hardscape (or the sidewalk).



\* Look for a view- Yes, you might be surprised that you have one! If so, create a cozy sitting area, maybe as part of the entry way, where you use pavers or flagstone, decorative gravel, stamped concrete, as the 'floor', and if it's hot and sunny, a shade pergola/lattice to screen you a little. This is the perfect spot for a small, ornamental tree- Flowering Crab Apple if sunny, a specimen Japanese Maple if shady and protected from the cold in winter. Ponders- this is an opportunity for a small fountain or bubbling rock.

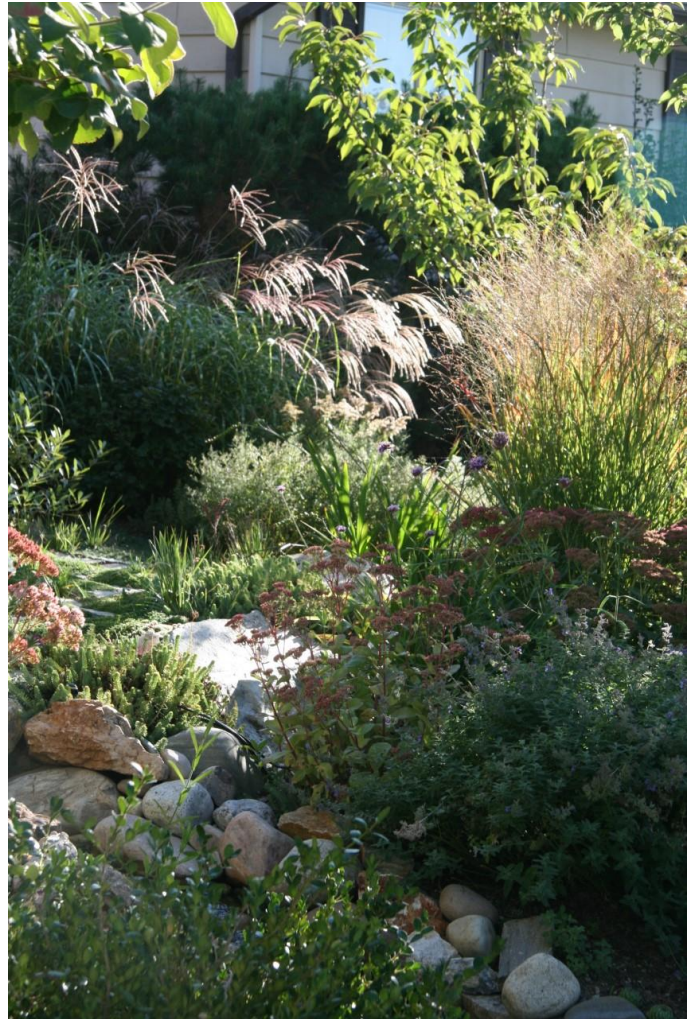
\* Produce Garden- If your front garden is really sunny, this could be your Veggie/Herb Garden. It needs a lot of careful planning, as vegetable gardens

can look messy at certain times, but using a more formal ground pattern- square, round, rectilinear, will keep the look tidy. A pretty French style Herb Garden, crossing paths, surrounded by a circle of Lavender, with a central bird bath, would make a charming feature.

\* Sloping Site- Any kind of elevation change is a bonus. This is your chance to have a 'Rockery' as we say in the UK. Rock Gardens look best if a few large rocks form the shape, (not a huge wall) leaving large planting areas, with smaller rocks interspersed to provide pockets for ground cover and tiny plants. This can work in sun or shade, just choose your plantings accordingly. Hey Ponders- opportunity for a small stream and pondless feature!

Let the eye and the feet wander- Front paths of course need to lead to the front door, but add a smaller pathway off of this, to wander through some plantings -perennials, ornamental grasses, under a tree, so that the whole landscape becomes part of arriving. A pretty bench along the way, some 'found' objects like driftwood, or a funky planter with colorful or architectural plants, will make the eye move over the landscape. If you feel the need to create a boundary on the sidewalk, an implied wall of low shrubs, perennial grasses, or rocks and gravel, will be an easy solution, without an expensive wall or fence.

You may find your neighbors really enjoy the nice view – you could have started something here!





## The Koi Spot

### Be Aware of the Deadly pH crash! How to prevent it from happening in your pond

The scientific definition of pH is “the negative logarithm of the hydrogen ion (H<sup>+</sup>) concentration.” This is where the H in pH comes from. The lowercase letter “p” refers to “power” or exponent. As minerals dissolve in water the equilibrium shifts. An increase in the amount of hydrogen ions makes water more acidic, while a decrease makes it more alkaline.

pH scale consists of numbers from 0 through 14, with 7 being Neutral, that is used to indicate the acidity of a waterbody. The pH is often misunderstood. A pH of 7.0 may be perfect, according to many, but it may be unsuitable for fish if there is a lack of calcium or buffering capacity. pH should be seen in context with all the constituents of a water sample. It is not so much the pH itself that is crucial, but the ionic content giving rise to the pH. It is only at the extremes that pH is a true indicator of real trouble. At low pHs the toxicity of ammonia is low. Low pHs may be brought about by carbon dioxide, produced by animals and by plants at night, dissolving in water and forming carbonic acid. If water of a higher pH is added then there may be a sudden increase in pH. Associated with this rise will be a rapid increase in the toxicity of any ammonia present.

**pH Crash: Acidosis** Water is constantly rushing (leaking) into the fish through their skin and gills. The kidney is responsible for pushing that water out. Water with a low pH scale is getting into the fish, and this requires that the body mobilize its own natural buffers to sustain the blood pH. Quickly, these buffers are exhausted and the blood stream

suffers a low pH called acidosis. Acidosis can be terminal for Koi or Pond fish.

If you notice your fish look like they have a white haze on their skin or that their skin is peeling...Test for pH and do an immediate 50% water change before going any further. Think of pH as the way the water feels against the fish’s skin. A low pH “burns” the skin because it is acidic. High pH “chaps” the skin because it is alkaline. The ideal pH reading for Koi and goldfish is around 7.5 but these fish can tolerate a range between 6.8 - 8.2.

We prefer to use pH strips to test pond water because not only does it give you the pH level it also indicates whether the water is buffered properly or not. Buffered water means the pH is stable.

pH tests vary a few points at different times of the day. It tends to run higher at night then lower by morning, taking its cue from the natural CO<sub>2</sub> and Oxygen exchange of the plants in the water. The difference in the pH at different times of the day is called pH swing. When it is more than just a couple of points off it can be dangerous and unpredictable. The object is to stabilize the pH at an acceptable level.

Now think of the pH suddenly falling. It would feel sort of like being dropped into a vat of acid. When the pH suddenly falls to a 6.5 or below it is called a pH crash and is very deadly. Fish subjected to a mild pH crash suffer peeling of the skin, very similar to our sun-burned skin peeling off. More signs your Koi are suffering from a pH crash are: the fish will lose their appetites, lie on the bottom of the pond and show signs of red streaking in the fins and body.

Severe crashes can end with complete fish loss. A drop in pH in a pond to below 7 will lead to sudden changes in your Koi's health. The longer the pond's pH stays in this range the worse your Koi's health will be. Colors in your Koi are likely to fade through the deposition of excess mucus while in extreme cases, Koi may even start to grasp at the surface of the pond. Acidic pond water is also likely to be destructive to plastic and metal surfaces. In turn, this will cause the pond water to become more toxic. In the case of an emergency a water change is in order to take the pH up quickly. A very clean system with

little organics tends to be lower in pH. Bead filters, because of their efficiency, can actually contribute to low pH readings. For readings that tend to stay low, baking soda in small quantities can be used to bring the pH up but you do not want to raise the pH quickly unless it's an emergency because it can shock the fish. Instead, it is best to use carefully prescribed products designed to raise the pH over a period of time and hold it at the desired level. We use pH stabilizers with great results. It's important to know that the stabilizers must be added back whenever water changes are made.

Concrete leaching into the water will cause high pH readings. Newer ponds where stones have been concreted together in a stream or waterfall often see readings close to 10.0. Again, care must be given to bring it down slowly. Once it is down you will then stabilize it with pH stabilizers.

Aquariums and ponds are not immune to pH swings and crashes. It's a great idea to test in the morning and in the evening for a week to get an idea of the severity of any swings in the readings. Increasing the pH is usually as simple as adding common baking soda slowly to the water.





## IHOP The Ponder Frog...



### Ponders... Rats!



### Well hello there!

If you have a pond and a garden, more than likely you have a rat or two in your yard. Many gardeners have had at least one encounter with rats; the typical urban gardener has probably had many. The Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is the most common rat in Utah. The Norway rat is a commensal rodent, meaning it lives in close association (literally, “shares the table”) with humans. Urban gardens are particularly hospitable to rats because they provide food, water, and safety.

Rats will burrow into any available earthen space within close proximity to food but prefer fresh, fertile soil to make their nests—a garden is prime real estate to them. A rat burrow can be anywhere from one to six feet deep and will have an entrance, an exit, and maybe even an escape hole. A typical

burrow will house a family of approximately eight rats. By counting the burrow holes gardeners can estimate the number of rats living in their garden. Gardeners are usually left up to their own devices when it comes to pest control. Some people want to maintain a pesticide-free environment; others are desperate to get a bad situation under control and will try any remedy. Rats can usually be managed effectively without relying on toxic pesticides. In fact, a good rat management program focuses primarily on prevention.

### LEARN WHAT RATS NEED AND ELIMINATE IT

Recognizing how to make your space less hospitable can help you to devise a rodent-reducing plan. Rats must eat one to two ounces of food a day and have daily access to water. Rats will eat everything that humans eat and many things that we would never eat. They are not vegetarian; like most mammals, rats (especially reproducing females) need animal protein, fat, and carbohydrates in their diet. Rats will eat the vegetables and fruits in a garden, but if that is truly their only food source, they will eventually move on to a site that meets their animal protein and fat needs. A compost pile with only garden scraps will not sustain a rat colony. But if table scraps including meats, grains, oils, or other fats are added into the compost pile, it will become highly attractive to them. And the warmth generated by decomposing waste creates a hospitable rat environment in cold weather. Compost areas must be monitored carefully, and if possible, kept in hard plastic or metal containers with tight-fitting lids. Bags of trash placed near a garden offer an all-you-can-eat buffet to a colony of rats. Like compost, trash should be kept only in sturdy cans with tight-fitting lids. Gardeners should always clean up after picnics and make sure food waste is removed at night.

Food intended for birds, cats, dogs, chickens, or rabbits placed in or near a garden may also end up feeding rats. Animal waste such as dog feces can also provide nourishment. Some gardeners feed feral cats in the belief that they will scare away rats. The reality is that most cats are quickly overwhelmed. A healthy breeding female rat can have litters of up to 12 pups several times a year, while the average cat may only take down a rat once every couple of days.

In areas where lots of rats are present, it's best to avoid feeding other animals.

For shelter, rats seek out areas where they feel protected from predators. Dense plantings, tall weeds, and piles of lumber, rocks, or other kinds of clutter provide safe harbor to a rat. Ivy and bushes close to the ground and around buildings are particularly attractive. Rats have very poor eyesight and use their whiskers (or vibrissae) to navigate their environment; as a result, they prefer to travel along straight lines and use curbs, walls, and foundations to get around. Gardeners battling a rat infestation can cut back vegetation at least 18 inches from building walls, remove ivy or other vines from sides of buildings and nearby trees, and trim back tree branches that touch or rub against buildings. Deprived of cover, rats will be less confident traversing these exposed zones and may move on to safer places.

A gardener can figure out where rats are traveling by looking along straight lines for the greasy rub marks that rats leave behind. These rub or smudge marks contain pheromones from the rat's skin and fur that they use to communicate with other rats. Washing the rub marks away with vinegar or biodegradable soap can help interrupt their established pathways to food sources and home. Hardware cloth (half-inch mesh) can be installed along the base of walls or fences to deter burrowing. The cloth should extend 8 to 12 inches underground. Even though rats can burrow deeper than this, many rats are deterred from spending so much energy to create a nest.

### A Rat Reduction Plan

- Move compost into rodent-resistant containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Store seed and pet food in rodent-proof containers.
- Remove fallen fruit or nuts.
- Remove all fecal matter (dogs, cats, rodents, birds) and/or food waste every day.
- Eliminate standing water and improve drainage, so water doesn't pool or settle.
- Remove clutter from storage sheds and garages.
- Cut grass or weeds and trim back plants around buildings and walls.

### MONITOR FOR RATS

The early spring prior to planting is the best time to start watching for rats. Gardeners should carefully check garden areas before planting seeds as well as later when vegetables and flowers are actively growing. Look for burrow holes, smudge marks, signs of gnawing, worn pathways, and droppings, all of which indicate an active rat infestation. Check around the garden perimeter a few times each week for any new rat activity and take steps to stop it. In short, think like a rat. Where do I like to live? What am I eating? What pathways do I travel between my food and nest?

**Hint** – hot glue dog kibble to a rat trap. Rats are really smart and can eat something very gently off a trap without tripping it. Glued food makes them have to work harder to get the treat which makes for a more successful outcome (unless you're the rat!)



# Random Thoughts



Got varmints?



Try what Craig Larsen does to keep them out of your garden and pond. It's called Nite Guard Solar Predator Control Light.

<https://www.niteguard.com/>



WANNA GO ON A PICNIC?



ALPACA LUNCH

What's the best thing about Switzerland?

I don't know, but the flag is a big plus.

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