‘Colonel A.J. Welch’

by Reg Henley

Reg Henley offers his own ideas on the origin of a unique, hardy water lily.

As a hardy waterlily cultivar, *N.* ‘Colonel A.J. Welch’ has received more bad press than any other waterlily I can think of and also has taken up more of my study time than any other hardy waterlily. ‘Colonel A.J. Welch’ is so different from all others that I have stated that I consider this plant to be a natural species. I say this, not based on knowing from where it originated, but based on a very close study of the plant itself.

With the exception of a small number of recently developed, hybrid waterlilies that have ‘Col. A.J. Welch’ as one parent, no other hardy waterlily reproduces viviparously from a spent flower. While some tropical waterlilies are viviparous, their reproduction is from the leaves. The newly formed plants of ‘Colonel A.J. Welch’ remain attached to the main plant for up to 2 years. While the young plantlets send out very long roots to reach to the base of the pond, they are much too buoyant to sink down to the bottom of the pond. If these plantlets cannot anchor themselves within two years, the support stem becomes brittle and breaks, allowing the new plant to float freely until it can anchor itself in the pond margins.

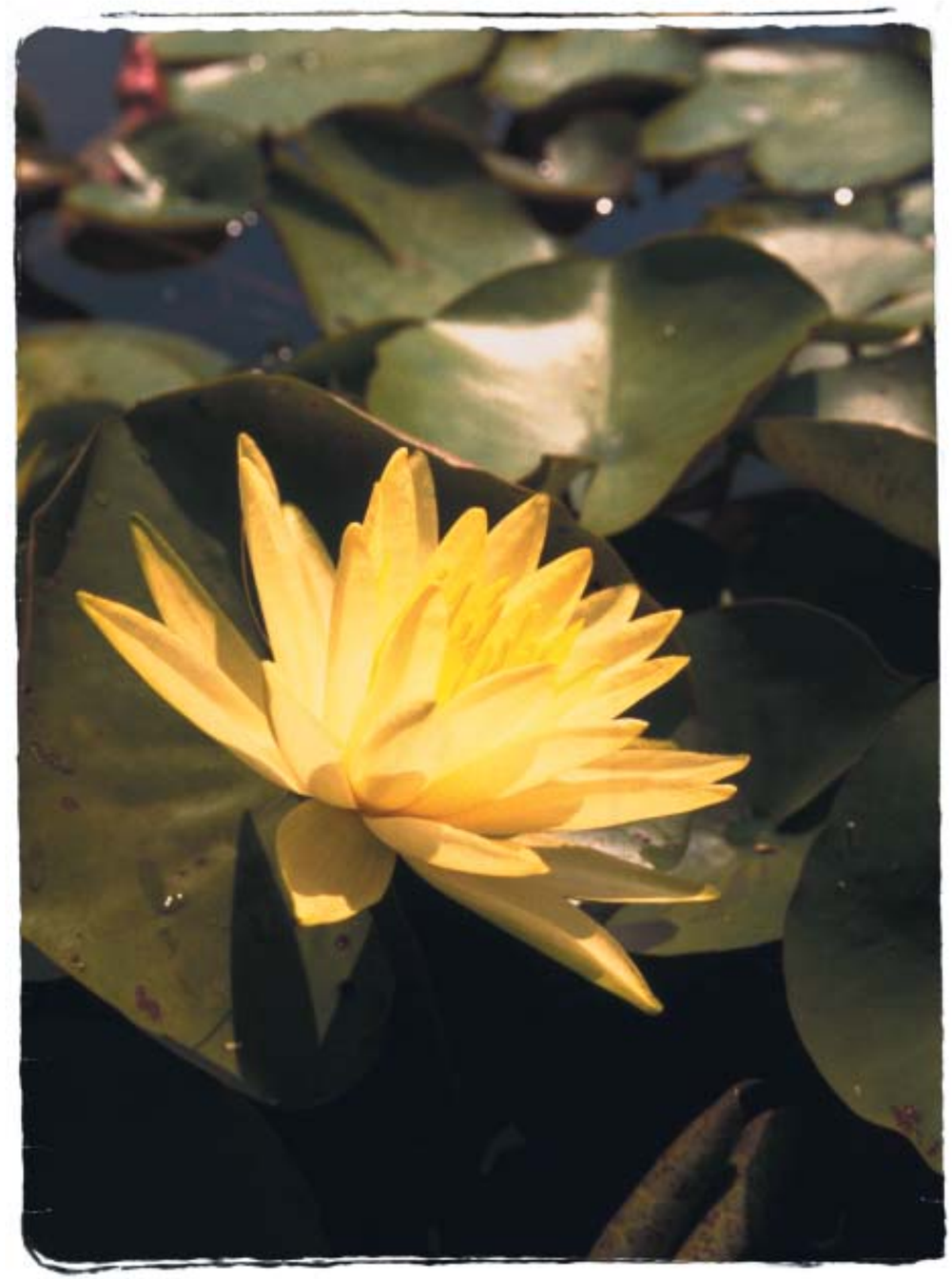
The rhizome is quite different from any other hardy waterlily I have been able to study. The small growing eyes, which appear along the rhizome, extend up to one inch out from the main rhizome on a stalk usually about 1/4 inch in diameter. A tuber, similar to those on a tuberosa rhizome, develops on the end of the stalk with roots developing from this tuber. The roots never develop from the supporting stalk. The rhizome itself also has many more roots than other hardy waterlilies, many more than are needed to feed the plant.

This plant has always been classified in waterlily books as a vigorous and rather coarse waterlily. I think this is partly due to the fact that at our latitude of 51 degrees North, the plant continues to grow all through our winters, producing flowers which seldom open due to low light levels. This indicates to me that the plant may be used to lower water temperature levels than those maintained in our soil-based ponds. Couple these traits with the fact that the plant sets seeds naturally if the conditions are right and you have my reasons for claiming its distinction as a species waterlily.

Over the years, this waterlily has been sold under various names, including *N. odorata* “Sulphurea Grandiflora’, *N.* ‘Sunrise’ and *N. odorata* ‘Sulphurea.’ The authors of books on waterlilies have stated this waterlily to be a Marliac creation, mostly for the sake

(above) *N.* ‘Perry’s Pink Delight’ is a Perry D. Slocum hybrid with ‘Col. A.J. Welch’ as a parent, the lovely pink hardy water lily producing occasional viviparous plantlets from spent flowers. *Photo by Perry D. Slocum*

(opposite page) Inspite of the ‘bad press’ of being a coarse lily of excessive leaf production, *N.* ‘Colonel A.J. Welch’ has many desirable qualities that make it worth growing. *Photo by H. Nash*



N. 'Perry's Viviparous Pink,' a recent hybrid by Perry D. Slocum lists 'Col. A.J. Welch' as one of the parents. It is considered mildly viviparous from spent flowers. *Photo by Perry D. Slocum*

of tidiness, as well as for having no other information from previous publications available. I personally do not believe Latour Marliac (1830-1911) ever had *N.* 'Col. A.J. Welch' at his disposal because if he had, the ease at which this plant sets seeds means that Marliac could have produced as many yellow varieties as he did pink ones. Yet his number of yellow and changeable varieties remained very limited.

In my library I can find no written evidence of *N.* 'Col. A.J. Welch' before the end of the First World War (1914-1918). Skeptics of my theory say, "If the plant is a species, where is it now growing in the wild?" My answer has to be, "I don't know!" However, from a very detailed study of this waterlily, I feel the original habitat could have been moving water because of the plant's extra large root system that would be necessary to withstand flood conditions. This theory is supported by the plant's ability to grow and produce flowers when most other waterlilies are dormant, as moving water would be cooler than static pond water. Likewise, the plant's unique ability to produce new plants at the water's surface suggests a situation that occurs in a moving body of water. I have also found that silting up the plants' crowns' stimulates new plant production, another condition likely to be found in moving streams. Perhaps the original habitat was destroyed by commercial dredging of the waterway.

All of this amounts to pure conjecture on my part, and I very much hope that some readers of this article may have information about the waterlily or the man whose name the plant carries. If you have any relevant information, please contact me, Reg Henley, Wychwood, Farnham Road, Odiham, Hampshire, RG25 1HS, England, and I will correlate any facts available and publish them, giving this beautiful waterlily a pedigree and the respect amongst growers it justly deserves.

Tropical water lilies, such as this *N.* 'Tina,' form viviparous plantlets from tiny nubs in the leaf's petiole.

For the water gardener, *N.* 'Col. A.J. Welch' can be a very interesting waterlily to grow. It is, without a doubt, the deepest yellow waterlily presently available to water gardeners in the U.K. While the growth can be restricted by a plant container and the plant will flower well if the water is crystal clear with 12-15 inches of water over the crown, it has the growth potential to occupy a water surface area of six square feet. Since the plant has a longer growing period than other hardies, growing year-round in my zone, as I have noted, the plant can provide valuable winter coverage and predator protection to fish when other plants are dormant.

This waterlily can really excel when planted in a natural, soil-based pond. Plant it in fairly shallow water but with the growing head directed out from the bank towards deeper water. In a few years you will have a superb specimen. I was fortunate, during my research years many years ago, to see such a specimen in a natural pond on a private estate. The waterlily had been planted on the north side of the pond where it enjoyed the advantage of full sunlight. It had grown out from the side into about 4 feet of water over the crown. Its rhizome was six inches in diameter; its largest leaf was 21 inches in diameter; and the flowers were 12 inches diameter, the largest I have ever seen in the U.K. on any hardy waterlily. It was truly a specimen of great size and beauty. Unfortunately, at that time I did not have a camera with me. Although no photographic record could be taken, the memory will stay forever.

Reginal Henley, along with wife Ann and daughter Clair, owns Wychwood Water Lily Farm in Hampshire, England, where they maintain one of four national collections of water lilies in the U.K. This article was previously published and is excerpted with the author's permission from the British magazine, The Water Gardener.

Unlike tropical water lilies, some of which produce viviparously on their leaves, 'Col. A.J. Welch' forms new plants from its spent flowers. *Photo by H. Nash*

The young, viviparous plantlet continues to grow while remaining attached to the mother plant. *Photo by H. Nash*

After several weeks of growth, this vigorous plantlet was detached from the mother plant. *Photo by H. Nash*

Using a Mechanical Filter

TO REMOVE SPRING ALGAE BLOOMS

by Reg Henley

A quick fix for algae blooms before your submerged plants begin their work.

At this time of year, many pondkeepers are troubled by green water. Although it is tempting to drain the pond or to run the hose through until all the green color has been washed away, neither of these methods brings lasting success.

The problem can be overcome in two ways. Firstly, there are many products on the market to kill the green algae, basically weedkillers in mild forms. All are effective, but only in the short term, as all the dead algae sinks to the base of the pond, decomposes, and the cycle starts again.

Second is a system we have been using for over 25 years because it is cheap and effective. The only equipment you need is a small water pump, a large plastic bucket or plastic dustbin, a length of hose that will fit the outlet on your pump, and some old, discarded clothing.

Before you begin, remove the prefilter on your pump's inlet and replace it with a normal screen to prevent any small fish or foreign matter from blocking the pump. Fit a hose, long enough to reach from the deepest part of the pond to about 3 feet above the edge of the pond, to the outlet.

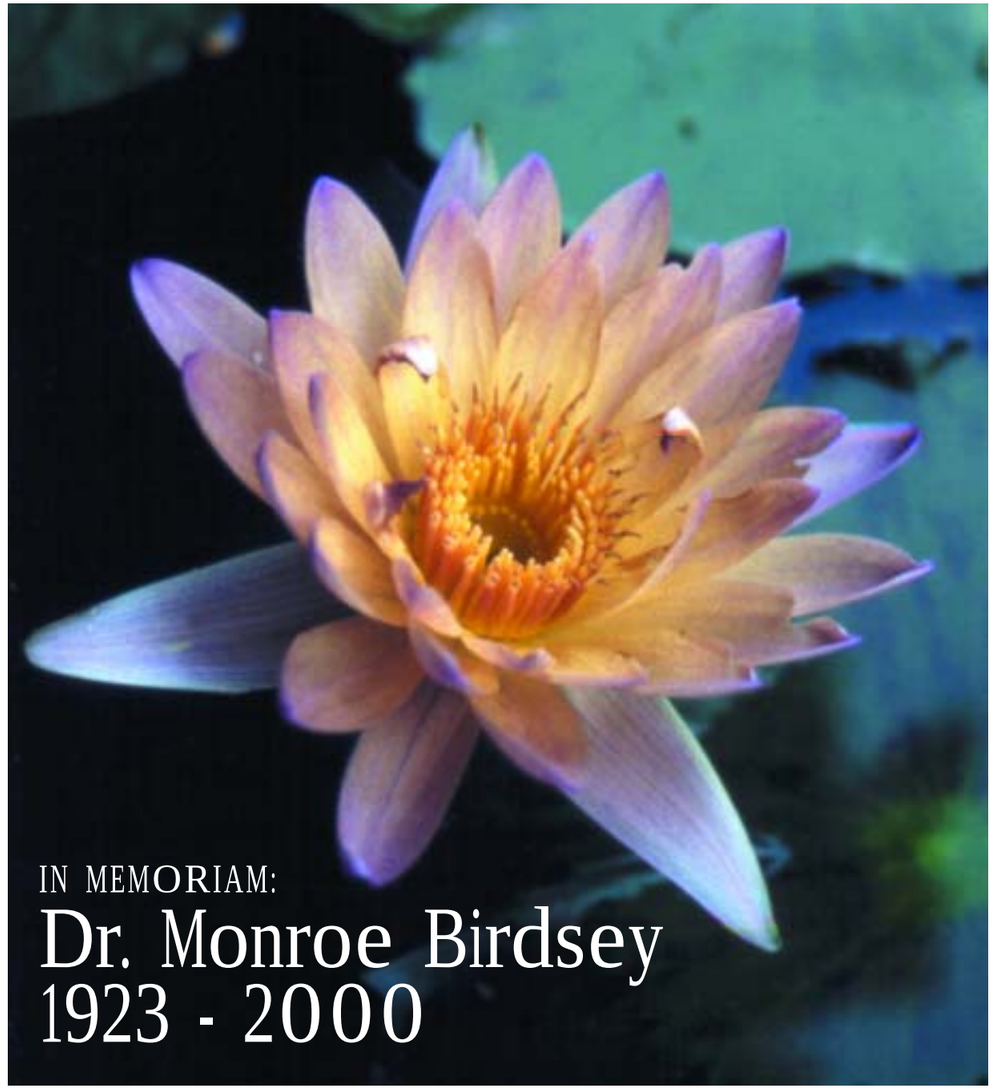
The plastic bucket or dustbin, depending on the size of the pond to be treated, should have a 3/4" hole cut through the side about one inch from the bottom of the container. Position this container on the edge of the pond with the hole slightly overhanging the water so that any water flowed into the container will pass through the hole and drop back into the pond.

Now put the water pump into the deepest part of your pond and lay the hose so that the water will be discharged into the top of your container.

Next, half fill this container with your old clothing, packing it down firmly. Since the clothing will become a filter medium, the finer the weave of fabric you use, the finer will be the filtering action. It is important to only half fill the container with this fabric. If the pond green is particularly thick, drape a single piece of fabric, such as part of an old bed sheet, into the top of your container and leave the surplus hanging over the outside. The sheeting acts as a first filter and when clogging starts, the outside corners of the cloth can be lifted, the contents dumped onto the compost heap, and the sheet hosed off and returned to the container.

Depending on the size of your pond and the flow rate of your pump, the pond should clear in 24 to 48 hours. What you have done is filter out all the green algae cells without changing the biology of the pond water. Once this initial spring growth has been removed from the water, most of our customers say their ponds stay clear all summer.

This method is purely a mechanical filter and is not recommended for permanent use. Once the job of clearing the water is done, remove the filter, clean its component parts, and pack it



IN MEMORIAM:

Dr. Monroe Birdsey
1923 - 2000

The passing of Dr. Monroe Birdsey is a deep loss to both the Aroid and water lily communities. Dr. Birdsey did his undergraduate work at the University of Miami, his Masters at Columbia, and received his Doctoral at the University of California, Berkeley. His thesis on *Syngonium*, though unpublished, was considered the definitive work at the time. A noted collector with one of the largest private Cycad collections in the world, Dr. Birdsey is perhaps best known to water gardeners for his tropical water lily cultivar, *N.* 'Albert Greenberg,' pictured above. A popular speaker of great wit and humor, Dr. Birdsey traveled the world from cities to dense jungles in quest of plants, many of which are now commonly cultivated in Florida.

Pond Splash –

GREEN WATER MIRACLE?

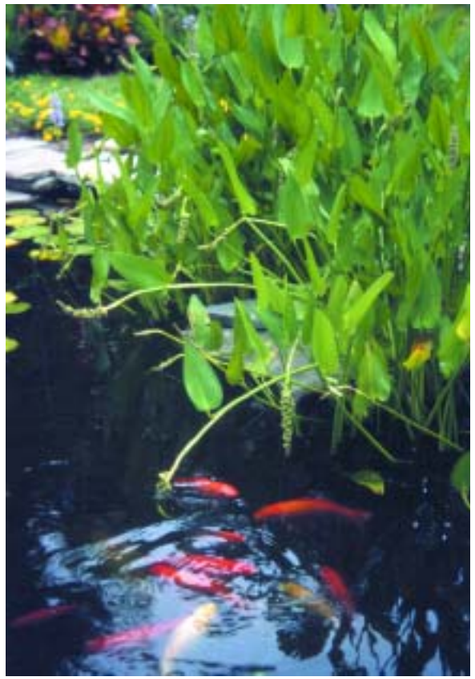
by Stephen P. Katona

Looking for a miracle cure for spring algae blooms?

As you walk out on your patio, morning cup of coffee in hand, you feel discouraged about the green water in your pond. The classic question arises: How do I get rid of it? *I want to see my fish.* You then begin to search for a 'miracle' cure. It may be chemical clear-all products, essentially weed killers usually containing copper sulfate or simazine. It might be water dyes or 'secret' bio-compounds of special bacteria. You might resort to hi-tech solutions — internal or external box filters, fluid bead filters, or ultraviolet sterilizers. After all, we Americans are the target of a 'quick-fix' marketplace. Got a problem? There's a solution that can be bought.

Our ponds, however, are living eco-systems of interrelated chemistry and dynamics. Use even a mild dose of copper sulfate in your pond and you are likely to also kill off desirable submersed aquatic plants, along with inhibiting the growth of water lilies and other higher level plants in the pond, not to mention the impact on water chemistry and the removal of your fish's protective slime coating.

Water dyes that shade the water turn the water blue or black, an artificial appearance you may not desire. Their shading action, too, may stunt the growth of aquatic plants yearning for spring sunlight.



The simple reason we all have for putting a pond in the backyard – clear, sparkling water, colorful fish, beautiful plants – and peace and tranquility.

Installing more filtration may be a necessary option if your fish loading is maxed out, but you will have to contend with more pond maintenance.

Bacterial compounds do not 'eat' algae; they use the same oxygen needed by the algae. (As plants, algae require oxygen during nighttime respiration, just as aerobic bacteria require oxygen to metabolize the activities of the Nitrogen cycle.) The new sludge-eating bacteria products enhance aerobic decomposition of solid, organic wastes; again, they do not eat the algae. These good bacteria will naturally colonize your pond in time. Certainly, adding them to the pond, at least initially in the spring, if not regularly throughout the season, enhances the biological activity in your pond.

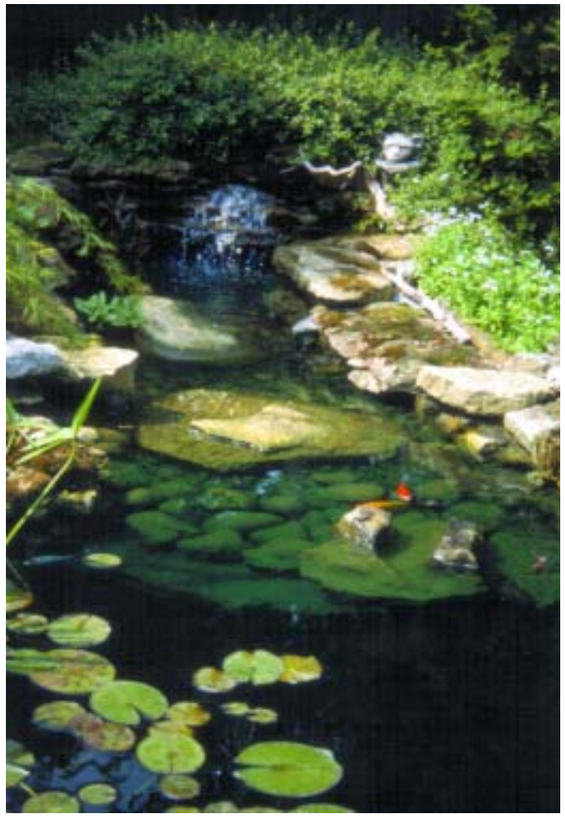
The most beautifully designed pond becomes less when green, murky water conceals the water's life.

UV lights definitely work, sometimes quite quickly, but then you must contend with removal of the killed algae lest it accumulate on the pond bottom to create another bout of algae bloom.

So what is the miracle-cure for green water? The answer is quite simple. It is the same in this millennium as it was in the last 1000 years…plants!

Do you know why your water appears green or murky? Single-celled, free-floating algae flourish throughout the pond water. These very simple plants quickly multiply to pea-soup proportions in the presence of the two factors essential to all plant life – sunlight and nutrients. In the early spring, while many of our aquatic plants still slumber in dormancy or are barely awakening, warming sunlight and available nutrients in the water urge the single-celled algae into prolific production.

In most cases, when you have green water, this tells me that you have a healthy pond. Hard to believe, but your pond is full of a thriving plant that just happens to be ugly. What if you replaced the ugly plants with aes-



Water dyes, safe for fish, effectively shade the water to prevent algae growth. However, their unnatural color may not be desired.

A marsh planting area can be part of your pond, or it can be installed outside the reservoir pond to provide vegetable filtration.

thetically pleasing ones? What if you replaced those single-celled plants with higher-order plants that would access the water's nutrients first – sort of like the bully on the playground? This is why the well-planted water garden usually experiences only a spring algae bloom. Once the higher-order plants, such as marginal aquatics, water lilies, floating aquatics, and submerged grasses begin growing again, they outcompete with the algae for the available food. A fully planted pond results in clear water of good quality for your plants, fish, and amphibians.

In the beginning stages of a water garden, you should plan areas for water plants. Building plant shelves within the main pond is one way to accomplish this. A water garden built with different depth levels provides planting shelves for a diversity of potted plants. In areas populated with raccoons, you may decide to use planting stands or pedestals to achieve the various depths required by your plant selections.

Constructing a marsh area is another method to consider. A marsh pond can be within a pond or outside a pond with the water flowing through it and back into the reservoir pond. A twelve-inch deep upper pool constructed as part of a stream or a waterfall system can be easily transformed into a marsh zone. The streambed itself offers yet another area to plant.

Using plants to deprive algae of nutrients is commonly known as 'vegetable' filtration. How many plants do you need? This depends on the amount of sunlight, dissolved oxygen, and waste present.

Remember that fish make waste. Also, do not add fish in large numbers at one time since the abrupt change in the influx of waste, both ammonia and solid, as well as the sudden increase in oxygen needs, can drastically

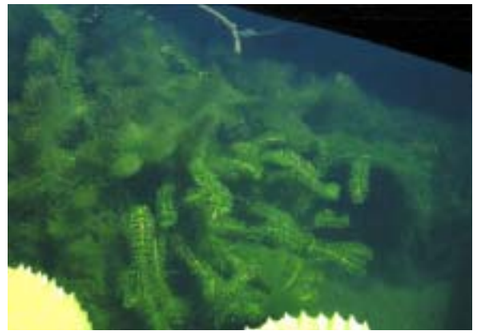
Plants, such as this water forget-me-not (*Myosotis palustris*), can be grown in your streambed for additional plant filtration.

impact the water's delicate chemistry. Remember that fish grow in size, obviously increasing their waste production and oxygen needs. Regardless of the type of biological filtration, all backyard ponds operate as closed systems with a maximum fish-holding capacity before the water turns foul with wastes and the toxic chemicals ammonia and nitrite. Generally, a pond's maximum fish-keeping capacity is given as one inch of goldfish per square foot of water surface, and half that for Koi. *(See Dr. Erik Johnson's column on page 16 for a more precise formula.)* The tested presence of ammonia or nitrite or the persistent presence of green water algae indicates a need to reconsider your level of fish-stocking.

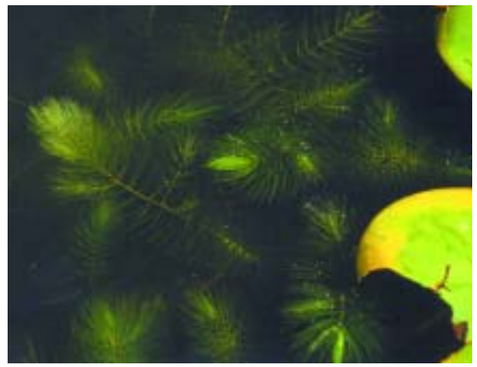
I always recommend adding fish last to a working system. If you add them, and particularly if you add too many, before the pond has 'established', i.e., has settled into a balance of enough aquatic plants to effectively compete with algae, you end up in a virtual war with your fish. As the goldfish or Koi grow in their green environment, you keep adding plants, and the fish eat them. You have lost the battle. The fish's appetite outweighs your plant budget. In such a retro-situation, an outside marsh area would be ideal. Picture a marsh where the water passes through one third or greater the surface area of your pond. This marsh is 100% planted. Basically, you have planted one third or more of your pond system, and the hungry fish can't get to the plants.

The end product of biological waste processing in your pond's water is nitrate, or plant food. If you don't have enough plants purposefully growing in your pond to use these nutrients, algae will flourish. So long as your pond is not maxed out on its fish-holding capacity, simply adding more plants can establish and maintain clear and healthy water. The more sunlight you have, the more you'll need.

In my opinion, the most important plant in a pond is anacharis or *Elodea*. Both are submersed, bunch plants. Anacharis has a longer and softer leaf than the more brittle *Elodea*. In Zones five and warmer, anacharis works quite well. In colder zones, *Elodea canadensis* is more appropriate for its hardiness and early season break of dormancy. These submersed



Anacharis and *Elodea Canadensis*, shown above, are the most effective of aquatic plants at nutrient removal from the water.



Hornwort or coontail, *Ceratophyllum dermosum*, is a highly effective submersed plant that floats freely within the water.

Another effective submersed plant is dwarf *Sagittaria*. Because fish will nibble this plant to oblivion, it must be well established within the pond before fish are added.

plants take their nutrients directly from the water, making them highly efficient at competing with algae for food. Generally, a pond sited in full sun will require approximately one bunch of 5-6 plant stems for every one to two square feet of the water's surface.

Surprisingly, your pond sets about creating its own system of submersed plants. Have you ever noticed that short, fuzzy algae coating that grows on the sides of your pond and pots? This is a sign of a healthy pond. This form of algae acts just like other submersed plants in a vegetable filtration system.

Another plant that is highly efficient at nutrient removal is water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*. Many pondkeepers, particularly Southern water gardeners, find the plant especially effective in the top of a biofilter or tucked into waterfalls and streams. This floating plant with long, trailing roots proves effective in shading the water (and depriving algae of requisite sunlight) and in collecting suspended particulate matter from the water. (The roots float to the water's surface when they become too coated with matter, requiring a good hosing to clean them before returning the plants to the pond.)

Both the submersed plants and water hyacinth are prolific growers and will require thinning. Anacharis and *Elodea* can literally fill a pond's volume, choking other plants and depriving fish of swimming area. Hyacinths can take over the entire surface of your pond.

Watch your fish for signs that they aren't getting enough oxygen when plants begin taking over the pond. Remember that submerged plants…and algae…use oxygen during night-

Water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*, is a tropical, floating plant that provides effective nutrient removal, particulate collection, shade for algae-prevention, and fish-spawning areas.

time respiration. Your fish will let you know too much oxygen is being removed from the water by gasping at the surface early in the morning. You may also find them congregating around the waterfall. Likewise, too much surface coverage prevents the water's surface from accessing the air, your pond's greatest source of oxygen. Supplying additional aeration may be necessary for both the health of your fish as well as for the aerobic activity of the beneficial bacteria that work to process pond/fish wastes. Are you beginning to see what I meant when I said our ponds are living eco-systems of interrelated chemistry and dynamics? The generic phrase "balancing your pond" is about all of this.

Obviously, establishing a natural balance within your pond is not going to happen over night. You must be patient. Fussing with the pond constantly usually causes more harm than good. You are dealing with a pond, after all, not a swimming pool. Supplying appropriate levels of all the key ingredients – bacteria, plants, fish, and oxygen – creates a self-sustaining, low maintenance system that fulfills your original purpose of installing a pond – peace and tranquility in your own backyard. As you walk out onto your patio, morning cup of coffee in hand, your clear water sparkles and your fish greet you.

Steve Katona owns North Hills Water Gardens at 1615 Babcock Blvd. in Pittsburgh, PA. You can reach him at 412-821-6525. For more detailed

Bacteria, fish, and plants all need oxygen in the water. Running your waterfall 24-hours a day ensures ample aeration.

Antigua Pond Quest

by Chuck Rush

Chuck and Dorothy Rush turn an island holiday into a pond quest.

One of my favorite Caribbean places to visit is Antigua (pronounced ahn TEE ga). It's one of the last islands that have not been completely overwhelmed with tourist traps. We've been there several times over the years. Whenever we really want to get away from it all, we start planning. Last Thanksgiving, SWMBO and I decided it was time to try a little Thanksgiving turkey on the beach. I started cruising around on the Internet looking for a new place to stay. We thought about going "all-inclusive" but decided it was like being on a grounded cruise ship. We found a little hide-away there called Long Bay Resort. They operate on a Modified American Plan (MAP), meaning that breakfast and dinner are included in the daily rate. We're talking accommodations for about 40 people and a 4-star restaurant! No TV, no phone, no radio…and one of the best staffs on the island. It's perfect for my idea of a vacation where the biggest decision I have to make is what book to read that day and whether I want the hammock or the planter's chair. I immediately got on the Net and e-mailed them. Sign us up for 7 nights in the Hill House bungalow!

Then I started wondering, do they have water gardens in Antigua? I decided we could afford to take a day off from relaxing and find out. Again, an e-mail to Louise at Long Bay for a little information. "Of course, we have ponds," she says. "I'll mark the main ones on a map and have it ready for you when you get here." Fantastic! My own Antigua pond tour!

While Antigua is known for its glorious, sandy beaches, the fairly dry island paradise does have ponds. *Photos by Chuck Rush*

Tropical plants, such as this hibiscus, create a tropical ambiance to the island.

She even arranged a rental car for me. "Right hand or left hand drive?" What a staff!

We started our Antigua Tour of Ponds on the third day of our stay. We got up early. Even though Antigua is a small island, getting around can take some time. And, of course, we wanted to be sure to get back for some beach time. We had a rousing breakfast and then loaded the car. Map, lots of film, SWMBO. We were all set. I got in and then immediately out of the car and in the other door….right-hand drive. I was in the car all day and had few problems with it since I'm left-handed. My biggest annoyance was always turning on the wipers every time I wanted to flip on the turn signals. I never did get that right on the first try.

Let me digress a bit. Rather than renting a car, I really suggest using local transportation when you visit any of the islands, particularly Antigua. The busses and cabs are all privately run. In fact, the cab ride from the airport to your hotel will be enough warning that you really don't want to drive here. It's an E-ticket ride!!! And you'll want to make a point of going to St. Johns during your visit. On one of our first trips, we took a bus there for another E-ticket ride. Ours was a little Toyota owned and run by two brothers. One served as driver and the other as a 'packer.' When you get on, you say where you're going, and they tell you where to sit. An aisle separates one seat on one side and two on the other. As the bus fills up, the arm rest on the two-seat side folds down into the aisle for another seat. We were packed tighter than sardines!

Back to the trip…there is a main road that sort of runs around the perimeter of the island and a few paved roads that crisscross the island. Most of the ponds we wanted to visit were on this outer road. Louise had warned us that because of the dry climate, we wouldn't find many ornamental ponds and that most of the ones on the list were farm ponds. Yep, cattle ponds. Well, cattle and goat ponds. Aquatic

Luscious pink lotuses totally filled the first pond we found.

From Shirley Heights, you can look down on English Harbor where yachts sit in anchor where Admiral Horatio Nelson once sailed.

plants are added to help shade the water to reduce evaporation and to brighten things up. The first pond was on the road just outside the hotel near the town of Willikie. About 50 feet across, this pond was filled with a beautiful, large pink lotus. I can only surmise that they were a native variety. Before my next trip to Antigua, I'm gonna have to find out what is necessary to bring some of these back! Anyway, when we were there, it'd been a while since the last rain and the pond was nearly dry, but the loti were still doing their best.

Next on the list was the island's reservoir, Potworks Dam. On our first trip here about ten years ago, this and the numerous cisterns spread over the island served as the main source of fresh water for the whole island. These caught all rainwater during the rainy months of August through November, hurricane season.

There is a lot to see around the island because of its broad history. Prior to colonization by Europeans, it was home to several tribes of natives, primarily the Caribs and the Arawaks. Unfortunately, not much remains of their culture. The first record of the island is a sighting by Columbus in 1493 who gave it its name as he sailed by. Around 1632, the first permanent English settlement was established, and they've been there ever since except for a few months when the French occupied it. Sugar cane was the primary product of the island, grown on large plantations supported by a large slave population. The British declared slave trade illegal in 1807 and abolished slavery all together in 1834. The sugar trade lasted a few years longer, but the remnants can still be seen in the ruins of the wind-driven sugar mills around the island. You can also taste it in the wonderful rum produced on the island, Cavalier, but a lot of the sugar for its production must be imported. The

Reminiscent of ancient Roman ruins, the remains of a stone military barracks is worth visiting.

island itself won 'local rule' from the British in 1965 wherein they governed themselves on everything but foreign policy. They gained outright independence in 1981.

On the southern side of the island are, to tourists, the most visible signs of Antigua's history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the British used Antigua as a major naval base. The depth and protection provided by English Harbor were perfect, and Admiral Horatio Nelson spent many years here. Although rumor had it that he absolutely hated his time there, the area is now known as Nelson's Dockyard. You can find the remains of the fortifications all around English Harbor and nearby Shirley Heights. These are definitely worth a stop when you visit Antigua. The harbor now does a booming trade, hosting lots of private yachts, as one of the four or five points of entry to the

West Indian steel bands are sure to set your feet dancing. Watch your step on the cobblestones!

island. Many of the historic quarters and storehouses of the naval yard have been converted into small hotels and shops catering to tourists and boaters.

Up on Shirley Heights, you can visit the ruins of barracks and gun emplacements, the ruins of a military hospital, and a small graveyard. Best of the Heights is the view down to

We called this farm pond "a reflecting pond" since, unlike most of the others we found, it held enough clear surface to reflect the clouds and sky.

Above the Harbor is an old Military Hospital cemetery.

English Harbor. Many evenings, you can find a great barbecue and a live steel drum band. It's great fun and open to all! Just be careful dancing as the cobblestones are the same ones Nelson walked and are a little uneven. A couple bottles of the local Waladli beer helps immensely here.

From the Heights, we started the trip up the western coast. This route took us up through what is referred to as the rain forest. Although it really doesn't get enough rain to qualify, according to the Antigua Department of Agriculture, it does get about twice the rain of the eastern side of the island. The trees here are lush and the air is heady with the aroma of foliage and the ocean. The road through here is very narrow, and like much of Antigua, the gutters are very deep with vertical sides — another reason to hire a local cabby for the day to do a tour for you! The pond here is part of a large stream that runs most of the year. Because it's buried in the foliage, there aren't any water plants, but that allows a beautiful reflection off the still surface. Along with the hardwoods, you can also see some meadows with palm trees in the middle of them. We sure don't have pastures like that in Texas!

One of the most spectacular ponds we found on the tour is in front of a small resort that is just beginning restoration. The pond is filled with hyacinths and lilies. The hyacinths haven't taken over because the few cattle seem to be especially fond of them. Again, it wasn't possible to talk to anyone on our impromptu tour as it was in the middle of the week and everyone was either working or in school, so I couldn't discover if the lilies are native varieties or not. I wonder if goats eat hyacinths?

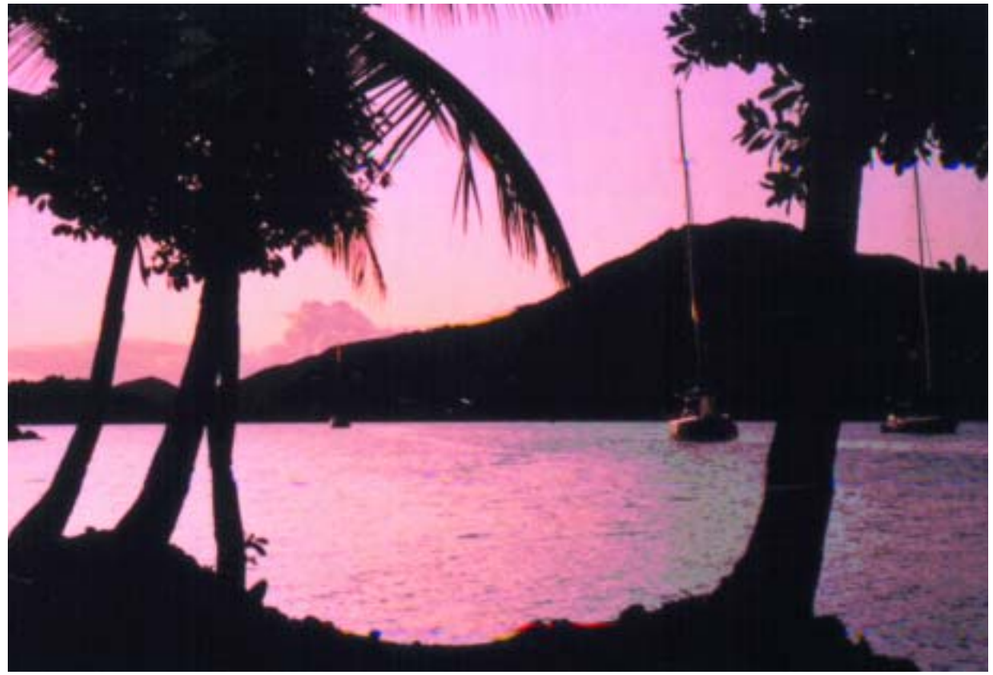
The first time we visited Antigua, over ten years ago, I was taking a twilight stroll while SWMBO got ready for dinner. I heard what sounded like a small child caught in the thick thorn bushes. I nearly flayed myself alive getting through the brambles. Instead of a child, I found a small goat calmly munching the tender shoots in the middle of the bush. SWMBO didn't believe my story when I got back to the room to change until she heard the same goat. For a little payback, I ordered a nice goat and conch stew at the restaurant. The goats are everywhere across the island. Their population soars until just before Lent. I don't know if they eat hyacinths, but goats sure are good eating!

A pond filled with water hyacinths obviously does not serve the local cattle.

We worked our way up the west coast to try and hit the capital, St. Johns, for a late lunch. On the way there, we had a brief shower. Not much, not enough to even make the road completely wet. But out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of a reflection on a small pond. Another cattle pond with hyacinths, but I had to catch it. There was another small pond a little further on that was just filled with hyacinths. Must not be any cattle here! Then we were off to St. John's.

When you visit Antigua, it's worth taking one of those bus trips I mentioned to see St. Johns on a Saturday. This is when the open market is the biggest. St. Johns is the stopping spot for a lot of large and small cruise ships. Tourism plays a big part here with lots of restored buildings for shops and restaurants. By the time we finished eating and shopping, we barely had time to get back for a quick swim before dinner. I'd write more, but the water is waiting and I can smell the turkey roasting!!

For information on where Chuck and Dorothy stayed in Antigua, visit Long Bay Hotel's website at http://www.longbay-antigua.com/lbh-5.htm



The end of a perfect pond-questing day – sunset in Antigua.