

Garden Adventures

by Joe Summers, Missouri Botanical Garden

Joe shares the story behind our cover picture.

Pond & Garden's cover photo is an adventure nearly 200 years in the making. Join me as I share this very personal adventure.

Issue number 4 of *Pond & Garden* introduced you to *Victoria* water lilies and the only *Victoria* hybrid created at Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG), *Victoria* 'Adventure.' *Victoria* lilies were first discovered in 1801 in South America, however, it was almost another fifty years before Joseph Paxton became the first to get one to bloom in cultivation. England, like the rest of the world, became captivated by *Victoria* lilies. In fact, the plant itself was named in honor of Queen Victoria.

Thousands of people recall becoming familiar with Missouri Botanical Garden after viewing photos of children, and adults alike, perched upon a *Victoria* leaf. This tradition was started by Paxton and continued by James Gurney Sr. at MBG in St. Louis. St. Louisians were first introduced to these great lilies in the 1890's and witnessed their first bloom in 1894. The cream-colored flower created so much interest that special illumination was set up to allow the public to view the night-blooming wonders. Attendance for the year increased by one-third because of the exposure created by the lilies. It is not known just



Lillian, meet Victoria
Photo © 2000 by Jim Sabo

how many people have stood on a *Victoria* leaf over the years. I have witnessed only one person fully supported on top of a *Victoria* leaf.

Lillian Margie Summers was just three weeks old when I began to persuade my beautiful wife Tonya to allow me to place our first-born on a *Victoria* leaf at MBG. Tonya knew

that Doug Holland and Angie Stamme, MBG staff members, along with myself had failed at our attempts to stand on a leaf. I guaranteed Tonya that Lillian was safe. Next, I contacted Jim and Laurie Sabo, the most talented photographers in St. Louis. I explained to Jim that I had heard that native South American mothers lay their infants on *Victoria* leaves as they harvest seed for use later in a lavish cake. "Jim," I continued, "I would like you to photograph Lillian lying gracefully upon a *Victoria* water lily leaf." Jim and Laurie agreed to give the project a try.

We arrived at MBG on Sunday, August 29, 1999, at 6:30 a.m. The Sabo's said the lighting would be best at daybreak. We approached the main aquatic



Lillian Margie Summers, age 5 weeks.
Photo © 2000 by Jim Sabo.

display pool at MBG. Featured in front of us, MBG Horticulturist Jon Sweeney has cultivated what I consider the best *Victoria* display in all of the United States. Jon works each year on creative and intriguing aquatic displays. He then maintains the pools throughout the growing season. The group included Lillian's Grandma and Grandpa Slack, Danielle and Chia Hung with their son Micah, and my buddy Doug Holland with Mary Merello, also an MBG staff member. The Hung family's attendance was important because Micah is just three weeks older than Lillian. They helped persuade Tonya to allow me to place our only child in such a dangerous photo opportunity. "If we were MBG staff



Daddy Joe helps 5-week-old Lily to become accustomed to lying on the *Victoria* leaf. Photo copyright 2000 by Jim Sabo.

members, we would not pass up the chance to lay Micah on a leaf," they assured Tonya.

Tonya's misgivings about the adventure were justified. She knows that the upper surface of a *Victoria* leaf is the only portion of the plant that is not covered with thorns. The thorns range in size from about 1/2 inch to over an inch and half in length. Other factors to consider: the pool in which the lilies grow is about three feet deep and the water was a cool 77



James Gurney, Sr.
 Photo courtesy of Missouri Botanic Gardens, St. Louis, Missouri

degrees that morning. The next caution to consider was that Lillian would get wet as water seeped through the stoma (pores) and gathered around her. Now that everything was in place, Lillian was 5 weeks old.

Tonya prepared our model, (removed her clothes and diaper). The Sabo's reported that they were ready. I pulled up my waders and fastened the straps. The sweet smell of the *Victoria* blossoms still filled the air. Lillian was the most calm of the group as I placed her on the first leaf. Grandpa Slack was too nervous to even watch, as he began chatting with our pal Angie Stamme, who just happened to be the staff member on duty that particular weekend. The Hung's comforted Tonya as she shot some very jerky video and a few photos with our camera.

Lillian was moved to various leaves for several different shots. The last shot before the 'model's break' was on *Victoria* 'Adventure.'

The break allowed the Sabo's to adjust their equipment and the model's mother to hold and dry her. It also allowed Tonya the chance to be sure all was safe. The Sabo's and I placed a ladder in the pool with a gangplank stretching to the edge of the pool to allow overhead and close-up shots. After Lillian's break, she was placed on a leaf that was about four feet in diameter. Jim then took our favorite shot. The *Victoria* bloom in the background is larger than Lillian's head. A few shots later, Lillian began to fuss. I picked her up and held her close to comfort her... and Jim took the photo that was chosen for the cover. "Nice one," Laurie Sabo com-



With Jim Sabo perched atop the ladder support over the pond, Joe adjusts Lillian for her photo session.
 Photo by Tonya Summers.

mented, Tonya's jerky video reveals. "Ironic," Tonya and I mused as I wrote this.

Photos that show people perched upon a *Victoria* leaf often also show that a wooden board or lattice work is used to distribute the weight of the guest. This lessens the chance of the leaf's ripping and the stunt going painfully wrong. Lillian was placed directly on the leathery leaf. The enormous lily pads float gracefully on the surface of the water, yet are very strong. This delicate balance was evident as we finished the photo shoot. Lillian, weighing all of 10 pounds, decided to kick her leg and poked a hole in the pad. I quickly scooped her up before anyone saw the small hole. Lillian was not stuck by thorns. Although Jim's photos never show, I was never more than a foot away from Lillian. We called it a day and both Lillian and the plants were no worse for the wear.



Tonya and Danielle hold the young daughters, Lillian, left, and Micah, right. Photo by Joe Summers.

We love the photos and hope you do, too. Nearly 200 years after being discovered, *Victoria* lilies are still providing endless enjoyment for many people, and most recently, for Lillian Margie Summers.☺

Joe Summers is a Horticulturist with Missouri Botanical Garden, aquatic plant production among his duties, and on staff at Plants, Ponds & More in Afton, Missouri. Joe is also president of the St. Louis Water Gardening Society.

Florida Pond Tour

by Donna Kiehl

Florida in August is HOT, but what better way to ease the heat than by visiting cooling Florida gardens? Held over a two-day weekend, Aquatic & Exotics annual pond tour featured more than ten beautiful gardens.

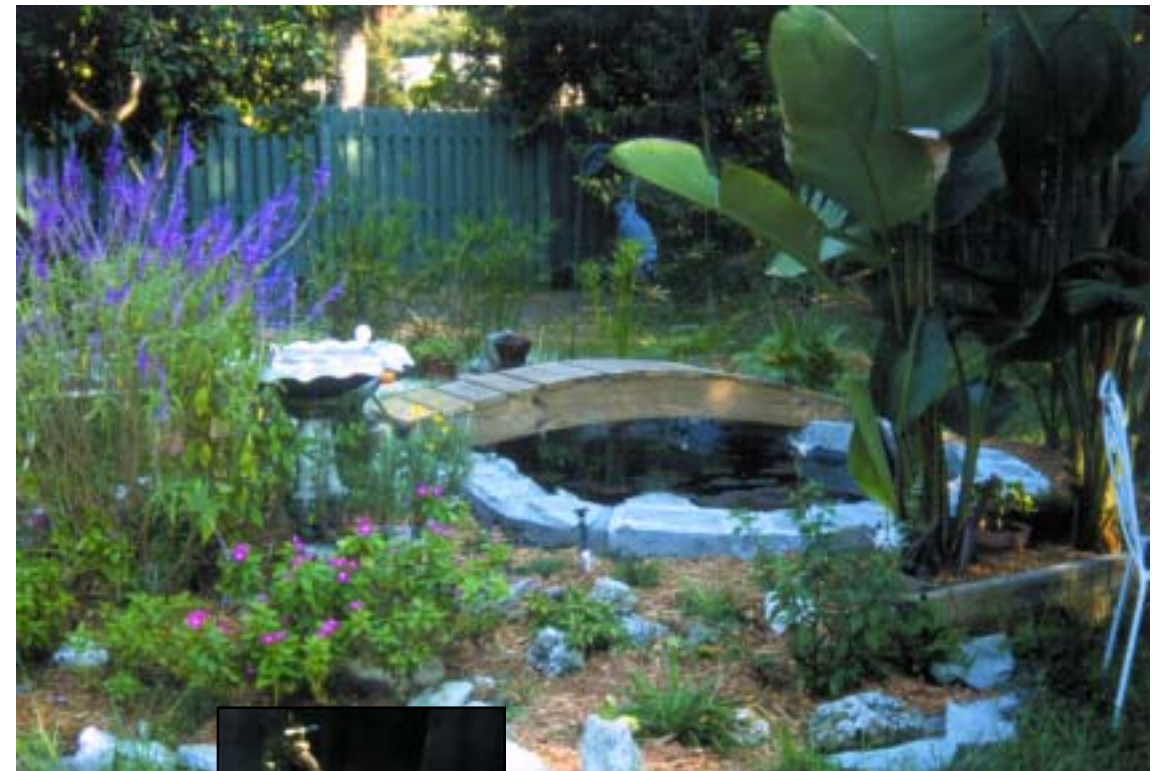


One of the Leas' several water features in their backyard tropical paradise.

Florida gardening is definitely different. It is lush and tropical. Bromeliads, gingers, ferns, Helleconiums, and palms are commonplace in the landscapes. Frequent rain showers nourish the lush plantings. Sandy soils mandate special techniques for pond construction. Not surprisingly, preformed ponds are commonly used for in-ground water features. Liner ponds, of course, often require reinforcement structure within the excavation.

Sandy & Tom Lea, Palm Harbor

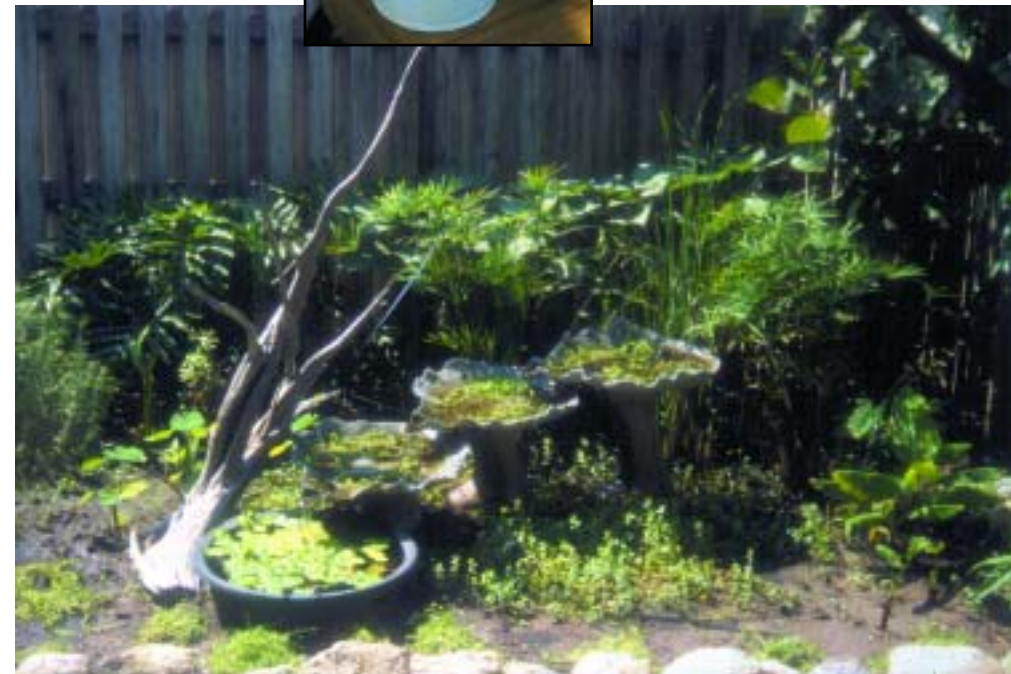
The Leas' garden is a real treat to the senses. Water can be heard from any location in this garden. The front perennial garden and entryway to the house boasts a well-established free-form Koi pond surrounded by tropical hanging gardens and a treasure trove of bromeliads. The rear of the house has a terraced backyard with many creative features, bog gardens, and ponds.



Entering the Leas' front yard, you find a free-form Koi pond.



A touch of whimsy in this watering can feature – the spigot seems to come from another dimension.



The trickling sound of water is a bonus to this stepped dish-garden design.

Cathy & Larry Welbon, Belleair

This free-form liner pond behind the rustic potting shed is complete with a hand-crafted bridge and is home to many koi. A unique multi-tiered terra cotta pot fountain also functions as a supplemental filtration system. Decorative rock edging is cemented into place around the pond and provides a nice platform for the frog fountain tucked in one corner of the pond.



The pond of Cathy & Larry Welbon

Frank Ennis, St. Petersburg

Frank has built a naturalistic backyard that encompasses three city lots. Giant oak trees provide shade to the many tropical plants and

ferns in this garden. Two enormous ponds fill most of this area. A footbridge spans the two ponds. A natural plant filter is used to keep these Koi ponds nice and clean. A wall of water

flows into the 40x26 foot Koi pond while the 12x15 is home to many aquatic plants. Conures and Quaker parakeets frequently come to eat from feeders located by the ponds.



The pond of Frank Ennis

Francis Pender, Largo

Mrs. Penders' son started building this backyard pond for her 70th birthday, but it was completed by her neighbor, Kenneth Crotts. Kenneth finished the project by adding lighted benches for nighttime viewing of this memorial pond.



Kenneth Crotts, Largo

Kenneth lives across the street from

The pond of Mrs. Francis Pender, in memoriam of her son.

Mrs. Pender. His backyard koi pond is nestled beside the house. Benches provide that perfect

place to watch the playful koi enjoying the splashes from the fountain and corner waterfall.



The pond of Kenneth Crotts



The pond extends into a narrow stream with a charming bridge crossing the water and leading to the lake's edge where Flip feeds the turtles.



Passing to Flip's backyard, enjoy a tropical-scaped wall fountain.

Phillippa "Flip" Wahl, Seminole

Flip and Monique Noujaim are not only neighbors that share a great passion for water gardening, but they also share a hillside that flows into their community lake. What they've created in just under two years is astounding and a special treat. Both of these adjoining, steeply sloping backyards are terraced with ponds, connecting streams, spillways, and cascades. Each rock was lovingly selected for just the right look and feel. A Copenhagen mermaid also graces Flip's front yard and pond.



Flip's pond is set near enough to her home to see and hear the pond.



Monique's pond system includes a small stream that simulates a mountain river.

Monique Noujaim, Seminole

Monique's Oriental Tea Garden features a Tea House, granite bridge, and Buddha perched atop a waterfall. A short walk through the passion vine covered arbor reveals Flip's tropical rain forest with lush foliage tucked in every crevice. The river generates the sound of rushing water as it cascades down and under the

bridge.



A serene Buddha watches over Monique's pond just outside the teahouse.



Although the pathway connects Flip's and Monique's gardens, the Oriental style trellis hints at the special garden within Monique's backyard.

Teresa Gregoire, Seminole

Neighbors on this cul-de-sac are using pre-formed ponds in their gardens but each with a different style. Passing through the arbor Teresa designed, you enter into the garden surrounded by perennials and tropical foliage. The landscape wouldn't be complete without the two pre-formed ponds located amidst the vegetation. The ponds are connected by a flowing stream where a wooden bridge is used to span the stream and small pebbled beach.



With a bridge spanning between the two pre-formed ponds, Teresa Gregoire has created the illusion of one large pond.

Barbara Tennant, Seminole

Just a few doors away, Barbara uses a different approach for her pre-formed pond. A slight grade to the backyard allows the use of a double stream lined with gravel and a waterfall at the headwaters. The double stream is separated by an island and is bordered by butterfly attracting flowers for seasonal color.



Taking advantage of a slight slope to the area, Barbara Tennant created a double stream to recycle water from her pre-formed pond.

Dean Shaw, St. Pete Beach

Two ponds are featured at this waterfront home on the Intra Coastal Waterway. Keeping fish stocked in these ponds has been a challenge, but fences with netting seem to be the answer to this problem. Both ponds are above ground with well-established plantings in and around the ponds. The liner pond is built up with landscape pavers, and the pre-formed pond is surrounded by a landscape timber frame.



Landscape pavers provide strong support to Dean Shaw's liner-constructed pond.



Dean Shaw has used landscape timbers to frame a pre-form pond.



Vince and Jill Iacopelli have discovered...

Vince & Jill Iacopelli, Kenneth City

Vince designed and poured this concrete and Marcite 275-square-foot free-form pond and elaborate filtration system. A footbridge ties together these extensive Koi ponds abundant with mature plantings. Outside the ponds, bog plants rim the edges to add dimension and texture to the surrounding tropical landscape.



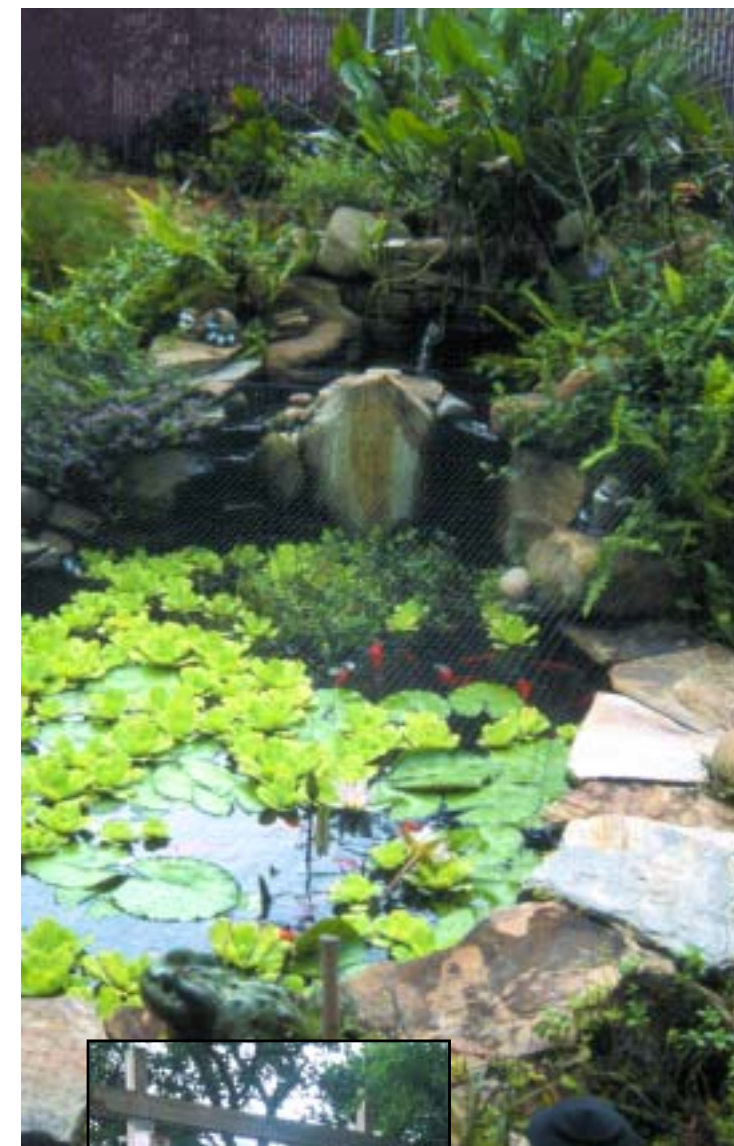
one Koi pond is never enough.

Paul & Dottie Williams, St. Petersburg

With a variety of plants and places for attracting birds and other animals in an urban area, this yard is a Certified Wildlife Habitat. The backyard includes a 600-gallon free-form pond chock full of plants and goldfish. It features a natural plant filter and waterfall. As a bonus, an extensive outdoor railroad meanders across the entire width of the backyard encompassing yet another pond.



Tucked into a shady corner of the Williams' Certified Wildlife Habitat garden is a pond and train design.



The Williams' pond uses natural filtration to keep its water clear and healthy.

Set off the end of the Williams' train pond is an arbor, adorned with Staghorn ferns, birdhouses, and squirrel feeders.

Dr. Lee & Susan Duff, Largo

A feeling of serenity is experienced upon entering this formal Japanese style garden through the soji-screened gate. Teak benches entice you to sit and view the pagoda lanterns. Specially selected rocks and Buddhas are set within the surrounding wide river of white pebbles. Perimeter bamboo plantings provide a soft privacy fence as well as the perfect backdrop for the rock waterfall and 5x6 pond. Nighttime is especially peaceful here as the soft glow from the pagodas washes over the natural landscape.



Combining plants, stone, and an artful wooden sculpture creates an inherently tranquil and pleasing scene within the Duffs' garden.



The Duff's pond is set in one corner of the garden, framed with choice rocks, a Buddha, and a bronze crane statue.



Another Oriental vignette is created with rocks, plants, and a pot. The flowers are one of the few blooming plants in the garden's summer season.



Set inside the perimeter plantings is a wide border of white stone, a setting for stone lanterns, rocks, and Buddha statues.



Subdued nighttime lighting is provided by lighting fixtures on the back side of the soji screen sections.



A free-standing, raised deck is located within the garden, yet closely enough to the house to facilitate outdoor entertaining.