

# Life & Light

## VARIEGATED POND PLANTS

by Linda Siler

### Plants with variegated or colored foliage add life and light to the pondscape.

When we think of plants, we automatically ask what color are the flowers. Let's change our way of thinking just a little and instead think of textures and foliage color.

We all love water lilies with their bright reds, cool and hot pinks, clean whites, and warm yellow, but why not look at the pads first? John Bross, owner of Ozark Aquatics, says that 'Chromatella' is his best seller. It's a big, hardy, gorgeous, yellow lily, but the pads, which are green with blotches of purple, are just as striking.

The little bitty 'Helvola' is a yellow charmer with very heavily mottled, deep purple on green leaves. The most beautiful pads on a hardy lily are, without question, the pads of 'Arc-en-Ciel.' The blooms are a very pale pink, but, oh, those pads. They open pink with cream and pale green splotches and age into green and cream with pink and maroon splashes of color.

The tropical lilies have the largest color selection of blooms, and they also offer the most spectacular pads. Night-blooming 'Red Flare' has reddish bronze leaves with small purple blotches. 'Albert Greenberg' has leaves heavily blotched purple with very wavy edges.

'Bagdad' is another wonderful tropical. The green leaves are heavily mottled with blotches of purple and red. The 'Queen of Siam' arguably bears the most colorful of tropical foliage – yellows, reds, and maroons – all over her pads.



Variegated grasses and the blue-green foliage of lotus provide color to even a Koi pond, otherwise devoid of plants.

For more colors and different textures, marginal aquatics present a broad selection. There are variegated cattail, variegated sweet flag, and the chameleon plant with its yellows, greens, and reds to help liven the shallows of your pond.

Cindy Murphy of Murphy's Water Gardens says that Variegated *Sagittaria* is the best selling variegated marginal at their business. It has narrow leaves and the blooms are a pristine white. This plant is hardy in zones 4 to 9 and was first introduced in 1997, so it's a new plant on the scene. There are also the variegated bulrushes, zebra grasses, and Japanese

ribbon grass.

*Phragmites* is another colorful plant that can be added to your pond, and as an additional reward, it bears plumes in late summer. With green and yellow variegation, it is a classy looking plant. Like the variegated cattail, *Phragmites australis* 'Aurea' is not so imposing and aggressive a plant as its common form which can grow to twelve feet or more, making it suitable for potting up in a water garden. A low wide-mouthed pot is still suggested, however, to keep the plant from tipping over in winds.

Water hibiscus bears red edges on its maple-shaped foliage for interest when the plant is not in bloom.

The leaves and even the stems of the tropical taros make those plants that scream, "Hey, look at me!" Some taros have violet stems that attach to soft green leaves, but the most striking has to be the 'Black Magic' taro. The leaves turn jet black. A mature plant is startling in its presence. In the temperate pond, taros may grow to only 2-3 feet, but in tropical regions, their growth can be most impressive.

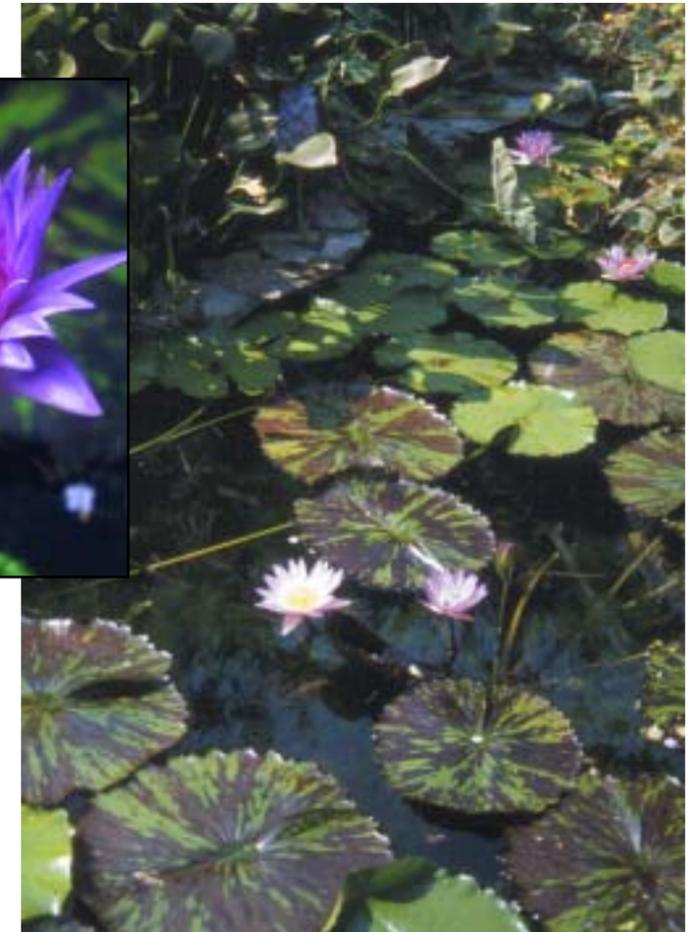
I asked Jerry O'Quinn what is the best selling variegated plant at O'Quinn's. He reported that the tropical mosaic plant, *Ludwigia sediodes*, was by far the number-one selling plant with its shades of green and maroon in diamond-shaped leaves that form an ever-growing diamond-shaped quilt across the water's surface.

Water wisteria, a low-growing, scram-

bling plant offers wonderful crinkled leaves with shades of green and gray that complement its soft lavender blooms.

Variegated water cannas are in that special class of 'presence' with the taros. Besides gorgeous flowers, the broad, sword-shaped foliage may be green and white, deep burgandy, or it may bear rich yellow, orange, or red striping.

When designing your garden, besides the flowers of the plant, consider colors of foliage and different textures and forms that plants can offer. Check with your local garden retailer to appreciate the variety available for your pond.



While the flower of 'Queen of Siam' is small but lovely.... it is the foliage which offers constant color in the garden.

Linda Siler is the President of the Springfield Water Garden Society in Springfield, Missouri.



(above) Lee Ann Connelly's introduction of tropical lily, *N. 'Helen Nash'*, lends the garden a lush raspberry-violet bloom held above maroon-splashed foliage.

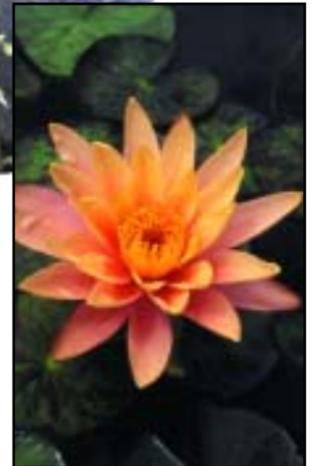
(right) While tropical 'Red Flare' is a night bloomer, your pond's days are sparked with bronze-red lily pads. (The line across the photo is inconspicuous fishing line in a grid over the pond to protect the fish from herons.)



*Echinodorus radican* 'Marble Queen' is a marginal plant with highly variegated foliage in cream and light green. Much like the spider plant kept often as a houseplant, melon sword sends off stems with new plantlets growing at their ends. Winter this tropical plant indoors in a moist hanging basket.



The tropical water lily, *N. 'Leopardess'*, enchants with lavender-purple blooms that are accented by boldly splashed green with maroon pads.



Kirk Strawn's recent, hardy water lily introduction, *N. 'Georgia Peach'*, offers burgundy mottled foliage.

*Houttuynia cordata* 'Variegata' is commonly called the chameleon plant for its wide range of color. A versatile plant, it can be grown in the pond shallows, in streams, and in very damp soil. The more sun you give it, the greater the range and intensity of the colors. Known for its invasiveness in the garden, monitor and prune it regularly.



The true pygmy, hardy water lily, *N. 'Helvola'* is perfect for the tub garden and small pond. Its tiny yellow flowers are prolific, but its marbled foliage offers full-time garden interest. Photo by Gordon T. Ledbetter



Tropical forms of the *Nymphaoides* family, otherwise known as water snowflakes or fringe plants, often bear variegated foliage to complement their delicate, papery flowers.



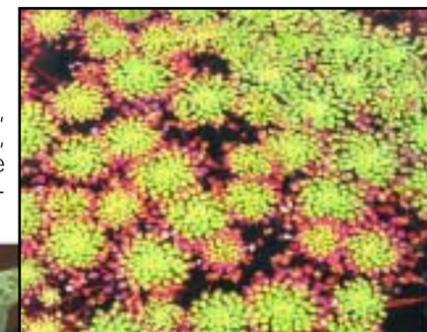
Variegated water celery, *Oenanthes javonica* 'Korean Sunrise' is a most vigorous plant well suited to running water in streams and waterfalls. It is an excellent plant for vegetable filtration. Marginally hardy in Zone 5, you may wish to winter a start over indoors for your next season.



Paul Stetson at Paradise Water Gardens in Massachusetts introduced this tropical floating plant, *Aeschynome fluitans*, that bears lovely, touch-sensitive, blue-green, ferny foliage with yellow pea blossoms. Winter this plant indoors!



The *Canna* family offers some of the most spectacular of variegated plants. *Canna americanallis* var. 'Variegata' is commonly known as 'Bengal Tiger' and bears yellow striped foliage. 'Pink Sunburst' bears multi-variegations in color. 'Stuttgart', shown in the center of the above cover photo from our Jan/Feb 99 issue, offers irregularly white splashed green foliage. While reputed not to be a good bloomer, the plant's foliage is worth the effort. Photo of Russell Morse garden in Kansas City by Karen Fiske.



A best-seller at O'Quinn's in Springfield, Missouri, the tropical mosaic plant, *Ludwigia sediodes*, spreads across the water's surface in green and red geometric shapes.



A recent and popular introduction, *Sagittaria gramineus* 'Crushed Ice' bears narrow, lance-shaped foliage marvelously splashed with white. It is a member of the popular Arrowhead family, although not growing as tall as many of its cousins.



The *Scirpus* family is a well-behaved aquatic plant family. Growing in tight clumps, it rarely intrudes into the rest of the pond. *Scirpus zebrinus*, zebra rush, offers horizontal creamy white bands on the tall, green stems. Shoots which come up pure green should be pruned to prevent the plant from reverting to its green form.



*Acorus variegatus* 'Ogon' offers exquisite creamy yellow and green striped foliage. Its sister plant, *Acorus variegatus*, of course, is the popular green and white striped form of sweet flag.

# Visual Rewards –

## PITTSBURGH POND CONTEST

*Steve Katona showcases his customers' ponds.*

*By Stephen P. Katona*

When I graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1995, a small garage was waiting for me at 1615 Babcock Blvd in Pittsburgh. While finishing my Integrative Arts degree (a combination of biology and art), my business partner Steven Kubrick located property. He started our business by name: North Hills Water Gardens.

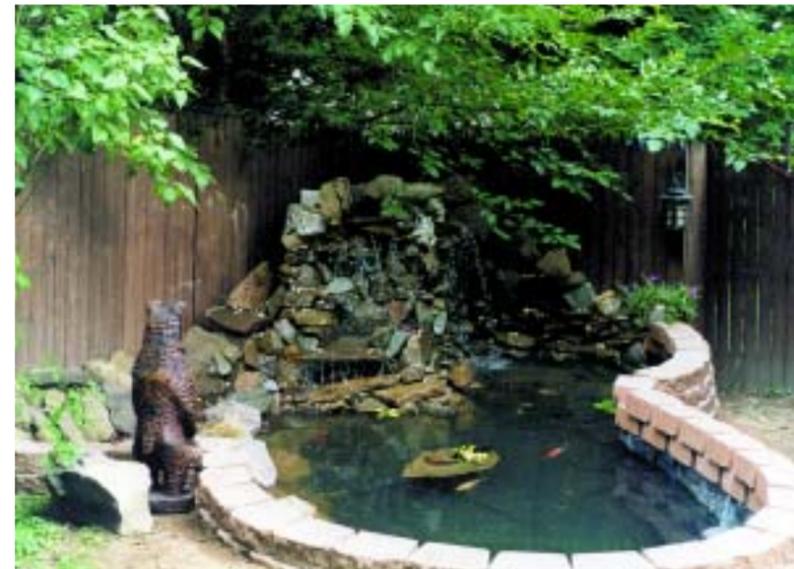
The 20' by 40' garage was bare. I parked among tall weeds in what was to be a parking lot. I sat in the middle of the building at a fifty-dollar desk from school with a phone cord stretched across the stained and marked concrete floor. One wall of this area eventually would display finished pictures of customers' ponds. As the business grew, finished water garden pictures began to collage our one special wall. I cherish

those 'visual rewards' for my sake of a job well done. Those pictures are not only NHWG's rewards, but also of the homeowners who made them a reality.

As thanks to these special customers NHWG recently offered a contest and a chance to have their visual rewards published in Helen Nash's *Pond & Garden* magazine.



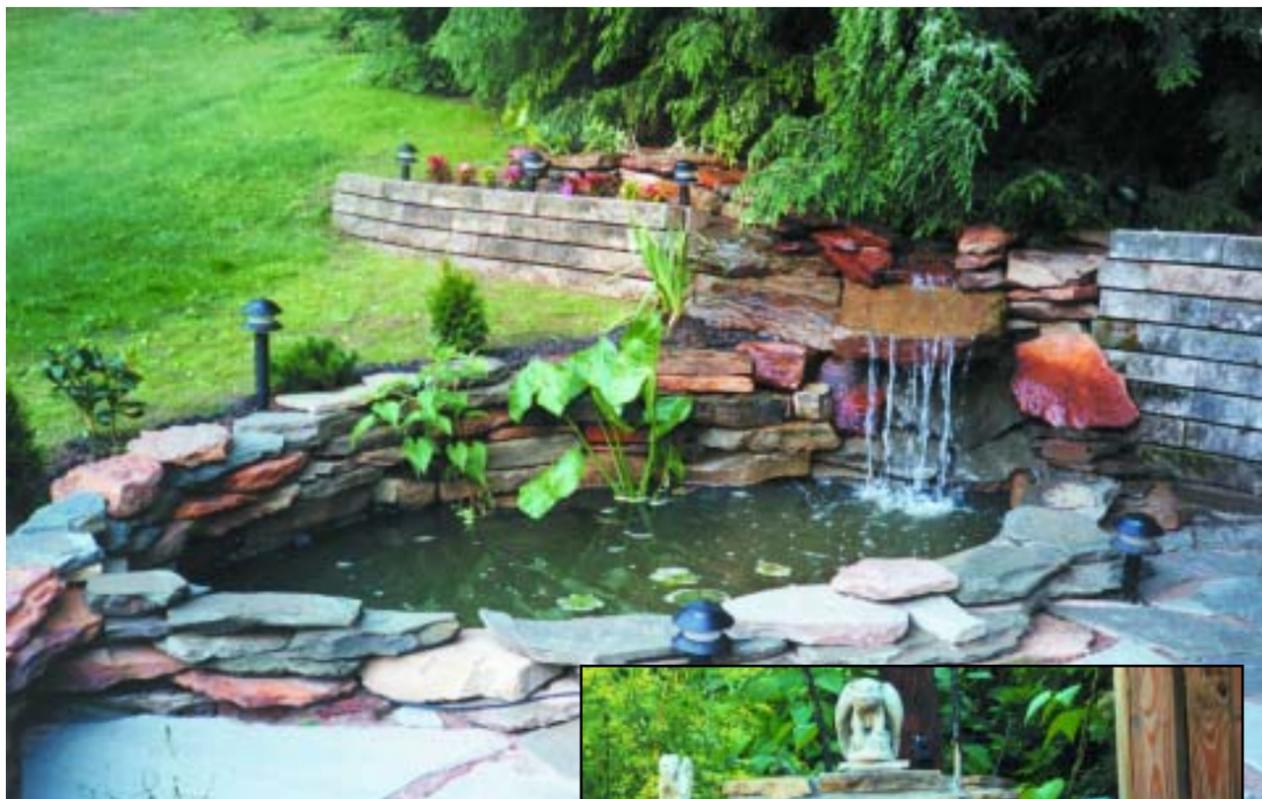
**Best Medium Sized Liner Pond, William & Mary Pegg, Pittsburgh**  
This lush 8 x 10 pond was built in 1998 by the Peggs and friends. It is located in their front yard. We wonder how many people dawdle by the pond before ringing the bell?



**Best Waterfall - Randall & Rosemarie Bryson, Monroeville**  
This unique multi-sided waterfall offers views from all areas of the yard.

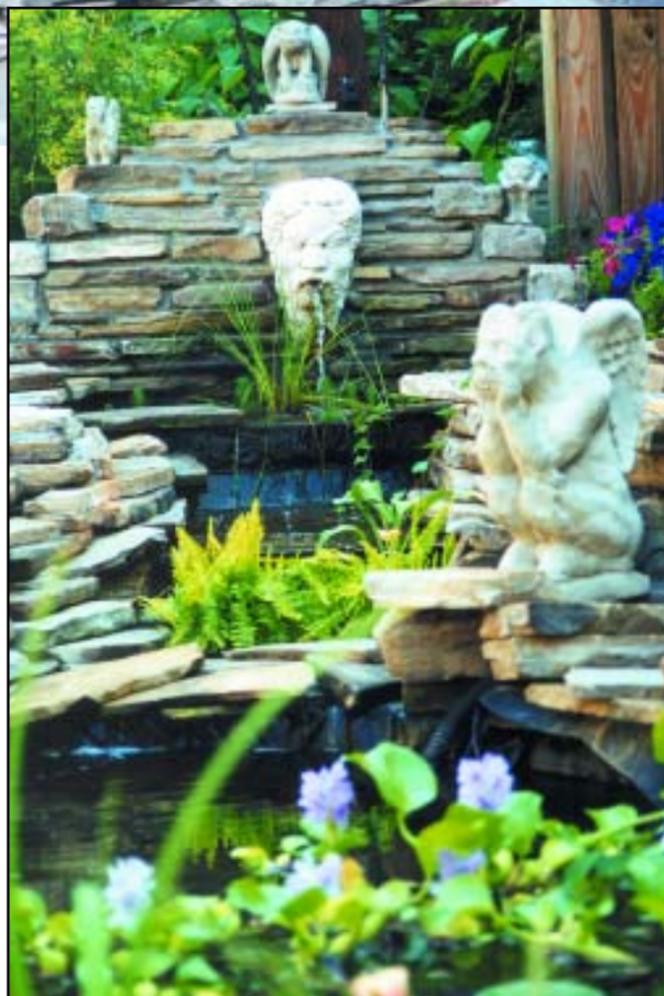


**Best Stream – George & Felicia Seifert, Beaver Falls**  
Set into a small elevation change off the back of the house, this stepped stream creates the illusion of more with its illusionary curve near the top. We loved the flowers and spouting 'Happy Hippo', too!



**Best Small Liner Pond**  
**Thomas C. Janusey, Pittsburgh**

Tucked at the edge of the patio, this small pond seems bigger with the water appearing to come from the larger framed area above. Ingenious illusion!



**Best Theme Garden Pond**  
**James Ferlo, Pittsburgh**

The Ferlo family must love gargoyles! The pond seems designed especially to display the charming collection.



**Best Integration of Water Within the Landscape**  
**William & Mary Pegg, Pittsburgh**

Which came first the pond or the yard? A beautifully knit together total landscape.



**Most Creative Use of Water in the Garden**  
**– John Sento, Donora**

John combines pond and garden décor into a special garden, promising per the message on his bridge, that if you make a wish and cross the bridge, it will come true.



**Best Professionally Designed Small Water Feature – Ron Kotcho, Landscape Designer, Pittsburgh**

Designed to coordinate with a California style home and existing scaping. The central trellis has mirror backing. The small water feature was designed to provide the sound of water with the wall fountainhead cycling from a 7x4x2 pond.



**Best Shady Pond  
Roy Bires, Pittsburgh**

Although some sun hits the outer portion of the Bires' pond, between the house and the established trees and shrubs near the house, the pond is essentially shaded with colorful impatiens adding the color accent. The screened in porch nearby suggests a most enjoyable living area!



**Best Wildlife Pond – Debbie Turia**

The plantings, setting, and very pond design seem to be an engraved invitation to local birds, butterflies, toads, frogs, and dragonflies. A most elegant wildlife pond!



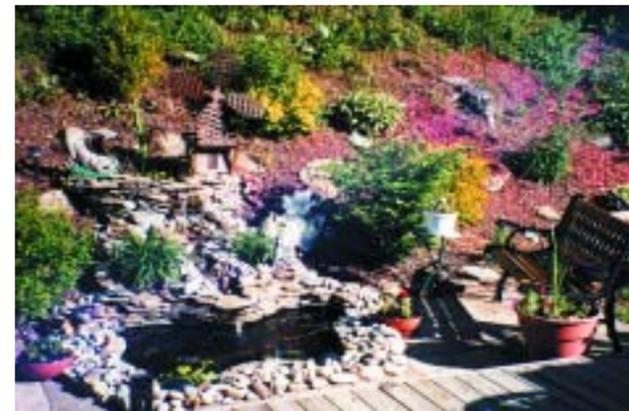
**Best Large Flowing Water Feature  
Robert Paoletti, Glassport**

What to do with a hillside lot? Build a spectacular waterfall, light it up, and enjoy it every night!



**Best Professionally Designed Integration  
of Water Within the Landscape  
T.J. Reynolds, Landscape Designer**

To satisfy the owners' request for a place outside in which to relax, TJ came up with an 8-sided patio and two ponds and a waterfall. The lines of the design, including the background fencing all work together to create an integrated whole.



**Best Pre-formed Pond Use – Judy Fink, Pittsburgh**

It's amazing what you can do with a pre-form pond. Judy and her husband started with the pond, added a waterfall, and then a bog. Lighted for nighttime enjoyment, Judy says, "It is our sanctuary."

*As co-owner of North Hills Water Gardens, Steve Katona is involved with more than the sale of plants and pond products. His company builds ponds as Steve conducts many seminars to help educate his local pondkeepers. Steve has also written a manual, Water Gardening for the Home Owner, to share his knowledge. You can reach Steve at NHWG at 1615 Babcock Blvd. in Pittsburgh, PA, phone: 412-821-6525 or e-mail: ciccarc@nhwatergardens.com.*

# Mom, Look What You Started!

by Susan Rickard

**A cement fountain pond led to the creation of multiple garden rooms in the Rickards' backyard.**

**I**t's all Mom's fault. Enlisting my brothers and my husband, Ronnie, she built a cement water garden in her backyard. Inspired, Ronnie and I built a small cement flagstone fountain pond, accented by a small flower garden, in our own backyard. That was only the beginning. Today visitors are surprised after passing through our patio to find one 'room' after another – all enclosed within our single backyard.

When we started to do the ponds, we knew we wanted them to be close to the house so that we could enjoy them. That first concrete fountain pond was just a drop in the bucket compared to what followed. We decided to put in a pond next to the little fountain feature. It would be 10x14 and would hold around 1200 gallons of water. There was just one problem. We fell in love with the Koi.

Since Koi and plants don't mix well, we decided to put in a larger pond, 16x20 and 5,000 gallons, just to hold our Koi. Enamored with these colorful fish, we sited their pond just off the back deck where we could step outside and enjoy them. Recycled and filtered water



Susan and Ronnie thank Sue's mother, Lorraine Green, affectionately known as "Granny Green" to members of the Miami Valley Water Garden Society, for her inspiration to add water features to their garden.

returns through a small waterfall that provides the relaxing sound of water. Creating a Japanese design motif, we used small boulders, evergreens, and Japanese lanterns for the surrounding garden. Tall evergreens framed the outside to create a room effect. To protect the Koi from blue herons and to provide shade beneficial to their best color development, we erected a shade cloth-covered pergola over the Koi garden. Even inclement weather cannot keep us from enjoying our Koi amid their Japanese garden.

We then had two water features in our backyard. Our next project was a natural – connecting them. An arbor entry and a bridge created the illusion of the two ponds connecting and sharing the same water. Leaving the shaded Japanese Koi room to enter the sunny water



...and they fell in love with the Koi.

garden area, the sound of flowing water is not left behind. Water recycles in the water garden through an antique hand pump complete with a handy dipper.

To take the water to the back of the yard, we decided on a stream leading from the water garden to a waterfall at the far end. This added the sound of water to the back of the yard. The lined stream is 90 feet in length and is naturalized with variously sized gravel. Very slow running water allows the stream to act as a bio-filter. A sediment barrel behind the waterfall keeps the stream clean. Another wooden bridge allows crossing to the wildflower garden between the stream and the privacy fence. We call it our wild flower garden because whatever wants to come up and thrive there will do so.

Climbing vines — hydrangea, akeba, trumpet, climbing roses, and variegated porcelain vine — decorate the privacy fence.

Next, we added a gazebo to the back and put in a bog and garden around it. The shallow water aquatic plants blend right in with the garden landscape that nestles the gazebo into a large expanse of lawn left as a 'front yard' for the gazebo where children can play. Behind the gazebo and linking its area to the stream and



Set just off the back of the house, the Japanese landscaped Koi pond is protected from herons and harsh sunlight with a shade cloth roof.



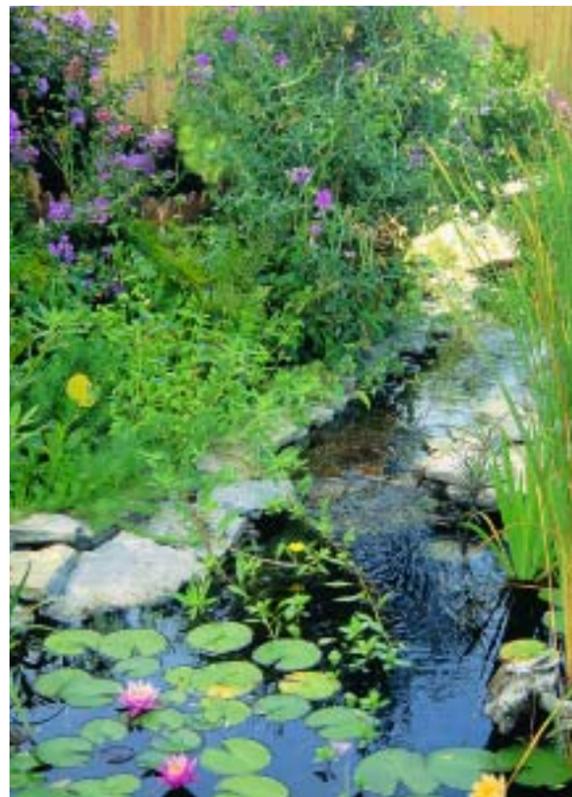
A path and bridge leads from the Japanese Koi pond past the water garden pond, gaining the appearance of a bridge over connecting water.

waterfall is the butterfly garden. Butterfly bushes, coneflowers, Joe Pye weeds, black-eyed Susans, and trumpet vines give food and rest to the butterflies. We have noticed they like to rest in the trumpet vine and between the boulders that make up the waterfall. An amazing variety of butterflies from dime-size to the size of your hand visit during the peak of the season.

All of these garden rooms were planned, but sometimes obstacles create new possibilities. We had a huge weeping willow tree that took up most of the yard. Besides monopolizing the

space and creating too much shade, we discovered that willow leaves turn toxic when decomposing in water. It acts like an overdose of aspirin to the fish. We decided to cut the tree back to a large stump with some stumpy branches. To kill it, we cut two rings around the base of the tree. Right away we decided to put Wisteria and Sweet Autumn clematis on it. Why these two plants? They are both aggressive growers that would give purple bloom in the spring and white bloom in the late summer with season-long texture interest in their foliage. The vine-covered feature is large enough to function as a partial wall dividing the ponds closest to the house from the waterfall, gazebo, and butterfly garden in the back. The bridge nearby leads into the wildflower border garden, too.

Although our gardens evolved around the development of water features, we have



To take the water to the back of the yard, the Rickards built a stream that empties into the water garden near the house.

enjoyed the landscaping opportunities, too. Around and between the rocks and boulders of the stream scramble many varieties of ground covers — sedum, ajuga, creeping Jenny, and variegated strawberry plant. Variegated plants combine with other garden plants to add color and life when things aren't blooming. We have also incorporated daylilies throughout the gardens. We love their foliage, and they provide color during the very hot season.

Driftwood, placed in and around the water features, provides a natural look. We have tried to stay in tune with nature when making the decisions on what we



A gazebo was then added to the back of the yard, near the stream's waterfall.



Against the back of the yard and behind the gazebo is the butterfly garden. Within a year after this photo was taken, the butterfly bushes had grown too large. Rather than trim them, Ron and Sue moved the fence.



All around the gazebo are shallow water areas set up as marsh gardens, full of luxuriant aquatic plants.

are going to do next. We have used tons of rock and small boulders to create as natural a setting as we could. Adding landscape lights and spotlights has made the gardens enjoyable at night. Low-voltage lights are tucked among the plants around along the ponds and along the stream with spotlights accenting the waterfall, gazebo and Japanese lanterns. It's like Christmas every night, all year long.

We have tried to make the gardens pleasing to the eye. The first thing we learned is to always use curves — never use straight lines when doing your landscaping. Secondly, to add interest and an inviting feel to your landscaping, try to make it feel like you are entering different rooms as you move through the gardens. This can be done without cutting off the whole view of the yard. With a glimpse of the next 'room' beyond, you create a sense of anticipation in the garden experience. Just like the rooms in your home, each garden can enjoy its own decorating scheme and purpose. We have the Japanese garden, the welcoming garden, the shade garden, the wild flower garden, the butterfly garden, and the fragrant garden – all with water gardens



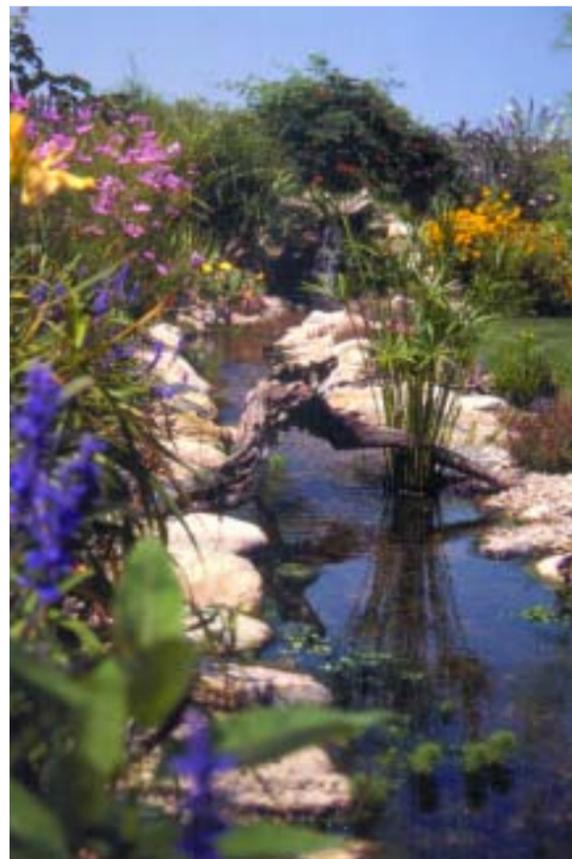
The Rickards' vine-covered, large stump remnant of a too-large willow tree demonstrates how obstacles can be turned to good use in your garden plans.

or water features incorporated throughout. You can see and hear water just about anywhere you go in our own created paradise. This makes garden chores very relaxing.

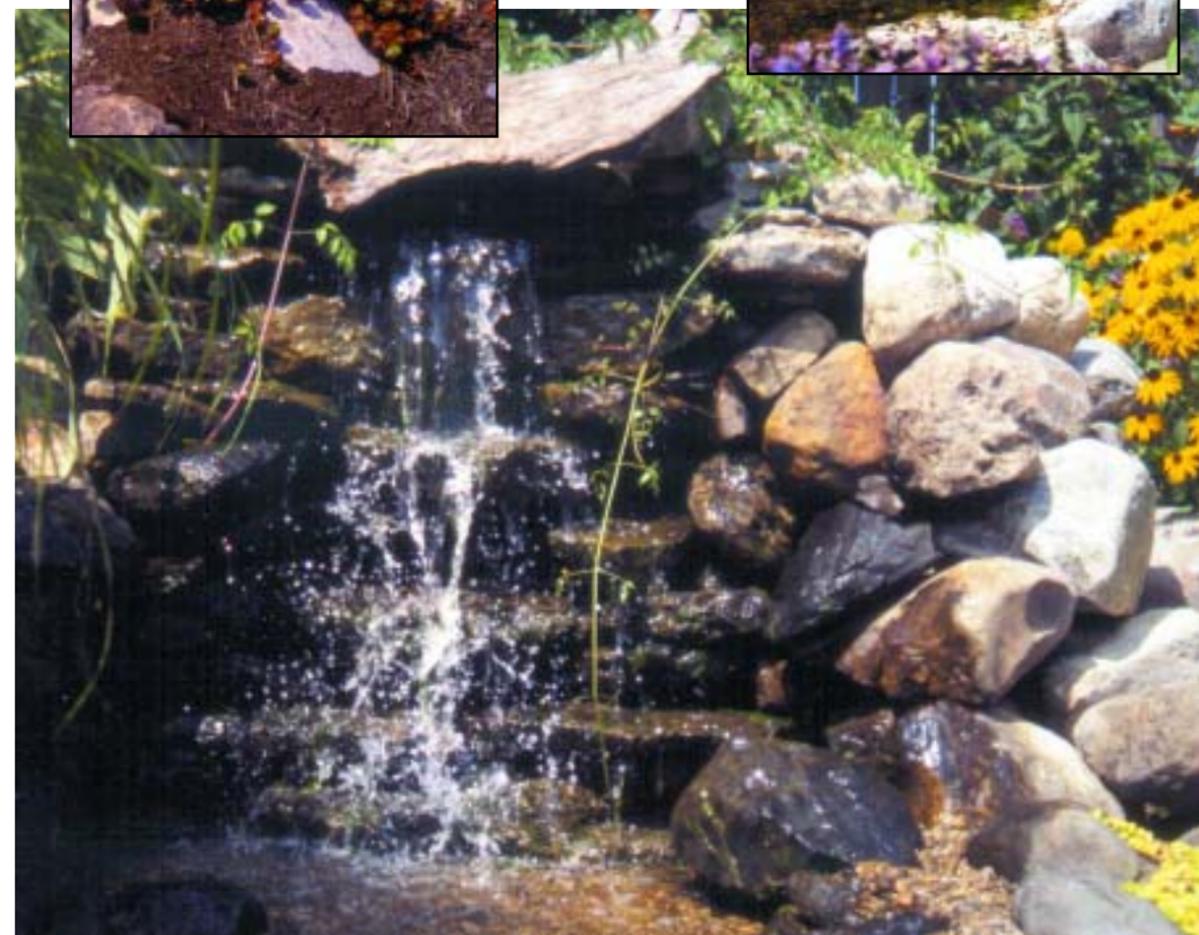
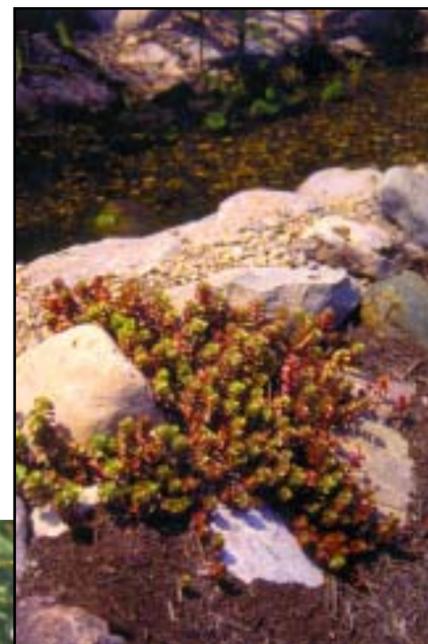
If you take one or two projects a year, it doesn't take long until your whole yard becomes as inviting as your home. Our main project this past year was to move the rear privacy fence back about eight feet since the butterfly bushes were growing so huge. You might imagine moving the fence rather than trimming the bushes would be the chosen option of people who

would install another pond just for the fish. However, this worked out well because we kept the existing fence posts in place, added a top rail, and then erected lattice over the area. This provided us with six trellises for growing clematis, passion vine, morning glories, and variegated porcelain vine. I wonder what will be the next project? Mom, this is all your fault!☺

*The Rickards' garden is one of the favorite gardens featured in the Dayton, Ohio's Miami Valley Water Garden Society's annual pond tour.*



The stream runs the full length of the yard to the waterfall at the back.



(top left) Many varieties of sedum and other low-growing plants are tucked among the rocks along the stream's border. Note how the Rickards have made the transition from stream bed to landscaping.

(top right) Driftwood is set aesthetically within the landscape to enhance the natural look the Rickards desire. Along the fence is the wildflower or natural garden that proves attractive to birds and butterflies.

(bottom) Everywhere you go within the Rickards' many garden rooms, you hear water.

# My Husband Calls "It" Quasimodo

by Shirley Rush

How to make a spouting pond ornament and maintain your reputation of invincibility.

I received an unusual request from my son in Dallas who, like a lot of sons, thinks mothers can do anything and everything is possible.

He sent me a picture of a gargoyle-looking statue that he said would look good in his water garden.

I didn't have the foggiest idea of how and where to start, but I didn't want to lose my invincible image, so I enrolled in an arts and crafts class at a local museum. Luckily there were people there who didn't know exactly how to make the thing but were adventurous enough to help.

We started by deciding on a size and what it should be on completion. We planned several ways to accomplish this and what steps to take to get the look that I had envisioned. Should it just sit like a statue or should it be a fountain by having him spout water from his mouth?

In the meantime, we were trying to decide what material to use. Our decision was to use a hypertufa formula. That consists of one part Portland cement to 1 1/2 parts peat moss to 1 1/2 parts perlite. This should be mixed with enough water to reach the consistency of cream-style cottage cheese. Mix the perlite and peat moss together, then add cement and mix well before adding water. Cement will dry out the skin, so



wear a pair of gloves while working with the wet material.

I found a rather sturdy box the size that I wanted. Since the hypertufa is wet and heavy, I completely covered the outside of the box with duct tape. Then a plastic tube was placed in the box from the position I wanted the mouth to be and then out the bottom for the water connection.

The mixture was then poured into the box. In four to five days the box was removed and I had a hunk of what seemed an impossible chore to make into something that resembled the picture.

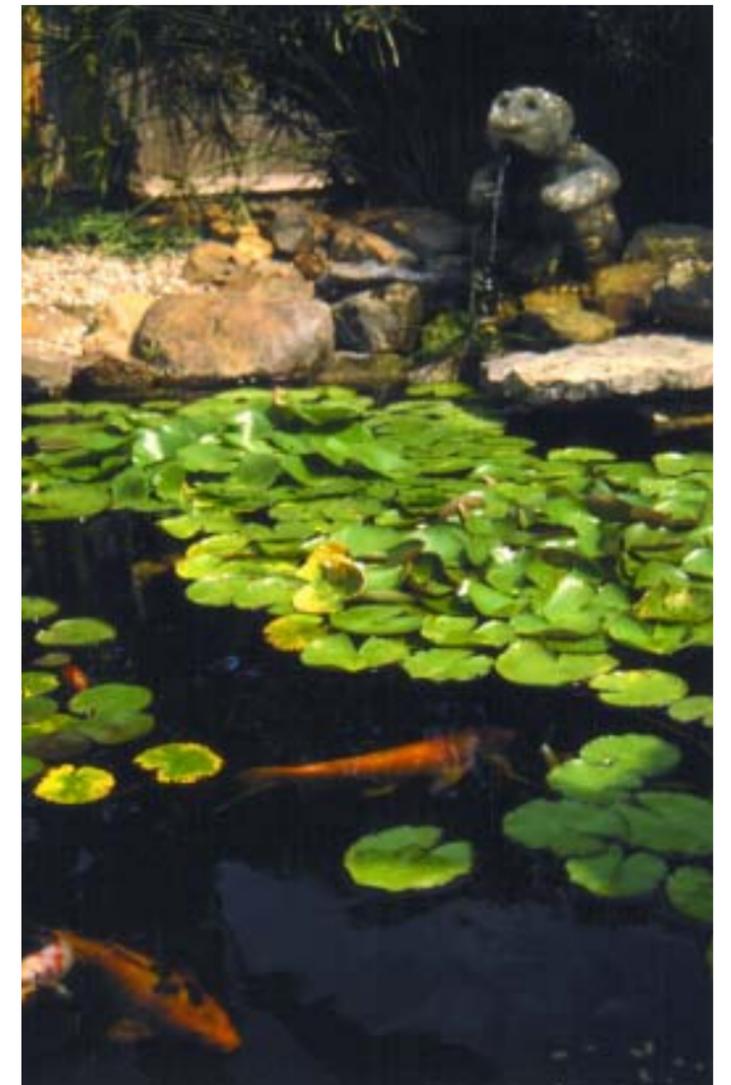
The idea, of course, was to remove all material that didn't look like the statue. What tools would I need? Well, I used several knives, rasps, chisels, saws, and even a hatchet. I exhausted all of my elbow grease and actually ended in the hole when it came to patience.

You see the finished product. It sits now in my son's garden, peeking out over his flowers and fish, spewing water from its mouth as if expectorating.



My son loves it and that's what makes it worthwhile. He's a real special guy and in spite of the problems and hard work, maintaining my reputation of invincibility in his eyes made it all worthwhile. ♡

Shirley Rush and husband, Chuck Rush, Sr. are the parents of our own Chuck Rush, Jr. They live and water garden in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Maintaining her reputation of invincibility, Shirley's Quasimodo statue is part of son Chuck's pondscape.

## How to make a spouting pond ornament... and maintain your reputation as 'invincible'

1. Use reinforcing tape to prepare the box for the wet and heavy mixture.
2. Mix 1 1/2 part peat with 1 1/2 part perlite. Add 1 part Portland cement and mix well. Be sure to wear gloves.
3. Add water gradually to achieve the consistency of creamy cottage cheese.
4. Rig plastic tubing where you wish to channel water.
5. Pour the mixture into the box, and let it dry for four or five days.
6. Remove the box and carve the hardened mixture into desired form.