

"Just Add Water"

Articles and Photos by Soni Forsman

Protecting inhabitants of the water garden

**Great Blue Heron stalking your pond fish? Deer eating your waterlilies? Both happening here!!!
What to do, what to do?**

Over the years, I've tried many deterrents including the water scarecrow and bird netting. All worked but with drawbacks - scarecrow did not cover the entire area and the water gardener would forget to turn the water off before triggering it and the netting is just inconvenient.

Probably our most bizarre defense against these unwanted guests was installing tall posts around the water garden and wrapping with deer/bird netting. Deer couldn't eat, the heron couldn't fish and I could not get in. I wasn't able to prune and groom the waterlilies and other plants without removing the netting. It was an idea hatched out of desperation.

The last years I've calmed down, some. I've simplified the deterrents, using mostly items found in the garage or garden shed. They are easy to install, uninstall but are not necessarily 'good looking.' I've moved past appearance. I'm just trying to save lives and keep the aquatic plants looking presentable.

Great Blue Heron

While the heron generally walks around the water garden looking for a goldfish snack, it began landing on the waterlily pots to get even closer several years ago. It was then that I started sticking plant stakes into the waterlily pots, spacing about three feet apart. That seemed a reasonable distance – not too many but still close enough to keep the heron from landing in between. Now, I don't wait to see a heron before I begin 'staking.' As I return the waterlilies to the clean water garden in the spring, I add a stake to every third pot. In a few weeks, the stakes become less noticeable as the waterlilies begin to bloom.

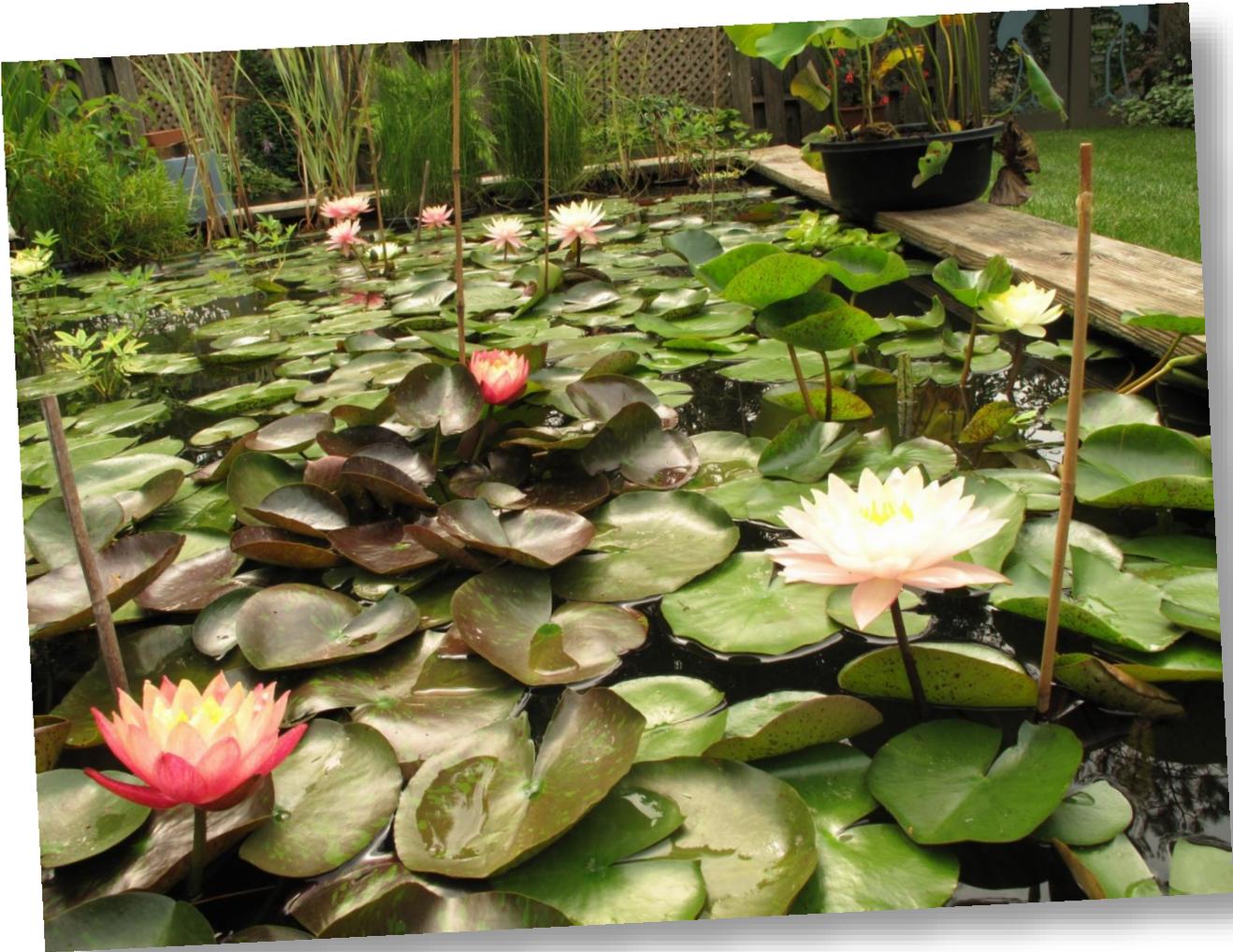
In addition to the stakes, I put plastic milk crates in the water garden. I weigh them down with a pot of aquatic plants or a rock. They can be used singularly or I build a safe house in the spring when the water garden is empty. This works for goldfish. A larger purchased fish tunnel is more appropriate for large Koi.



Water garden wrapped in deer/bird netting.

Deer

Years ago, a little black-and-white analog television was our answer to keeping deer away. We put it near a window in an outbuilding. Attached to a timer, it came on at 10 p.m. and went off at 6 a.m. Until our little low-tech TV became obsolete, we had no deer problems.



Plant stakes keep the heron away

Still yearning for those years – as the deer return in 2017. About 10 days ago, I discovered not only petioles without pads sticking out of the water but some containers lying on their sides. Deer had visited overnight. I can't spray Liquid Fence or other products due to the fish. Right now I have yellow 'caution' tape wrapped around the water garden. It is a crime scene

I pounded plant stakes around the water garden out a foot from the edge. The tape is about three feet off the ground and attached to the stakes with 2-inch clips. My thinking is that the deer will have to touch the tape to reach the waterlilies and will be discouraged. My husband Dave suggested that monofilament line would be less visible. His idea, appearance-wise, is much better. I haven't done that, yet, as it is so easy to unclip the yellow tape when I need to get into the water garden.



Fish Safe House - two plastic milk crates topped with a 2'x4' heavy plastic grate. For weight, two to four inexpensive 6''x16'' concrete patio blocks. Roof decoration is a piece of driftwood secured with rocks. Later, I added a water plant on each patio block.



Water garden - June 2017

Will our wildlife move on to where the eating is easier? I can only hope