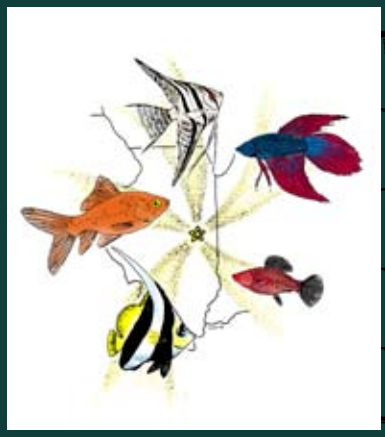

In Seine Menu

Champaign Area Fish Exchange, Inc.

Members Educational News Update

April 2008

Champaign Area Fish Exchange

Board of Trustees

Art Pesch, Chair	217-356-7090	capesch@soltec.net
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Officers & Committees

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Auction	Art Pesch	217-356-7090	capesch@soltec.net
FAAS Delegate	Carie Nixon	217-867-2290	dragonfly@illicom.net

MONTHLY MEETING: Next meeting – Saterday, Arpil 5, 2008, will be at Kleiss Nursery, 349 County Rd 1500 E, Tolono, Illinois. Meeting starts at 1:00 p.m. There will be no bowl show or auction this month.

PROGRAM: Kleiss Nursery staff will show us their aquatic greenhouse and wonderful collection of watergarden plants. You can get a sneak preview and lists of aquatic plants they have available on their website: http://www.kleissnursery.com/

CAFE Website: www.champaignfish.com

Cover photo: Waterlily, variety Souix. Photo by Carie Nixon.

To submit articles and classified ads to the newsletter, email Carie Nixon at dragonfly@illicom.net
or mail to Carie Nixon, 381 County Rd 1300 E, Tolono, IL 61880
You may also bring material for the newsletter to the monthly meeting.

Calendar of Events

Apr 5 **CAFE** meeting at Kleiss Nursery near Tolono, Illinois, 1:00 pm

Apr 5 **Tri-County Tropical Fish Society Auction** of Fish and Aquarium Equipment, **New Location:** VFW Post 2078, 123 Meadows Ave, East Peoria, IL. Register at 9:00 am, Auction starts at 10:30 am. For seller number and auction sheets and other information, call Sue Atwell at 309-697-6149 or e-mail suetctfs@yahoo.com.

May 3 **CAFE** meeting, 7:00 pm, Tour of members' fish rooms, Urbana, IL

July 12 **CAFE Summer Auction**, Urbana Civic Center, Urbana, IL

Aug 6-9 **The International Symposium On Freshwater Stingray Biology**
Holiday Inn Express, Palatine, Illinois. stingraysymposium.com

Aug 19 **Missouri Aquarium Society, Summer Auction** at the Stratford Inn, 800 S. Highway Dr., Fenton, MO. Viewing at 11:00 AM, Auction at NOON. For more info contact John 618-604-7228 or Johnsfishy@att.net or visit the Website at: www.missouriaquariumsociety.org

Sep 2 **Circle City Aquarium Club Fall Auction** at Holiday Inn, Beech Grove, IN for more info contact Bill Flowers at ccacauction@gmail.com

Nov 18 **Missouri Aquarium Society Fall Auction** at the Stratford Inn, 800 S. Highway Dr., Fenton, MO. Viewing at11:00 AM, Auction at NOON. For more info contact John 618-604-7228 or Johnsfishy@att.net or visit the Website at: www.missouriaquariumsociety.org

Classified Ads

(free to CAFE members)

Fish For Sale:

Excellent tank cleaners: young bristlenose catfish (*Ancistrus* sp.) for sale. F1 generation from wild caught parents. $4 each or 3 for $10. Call Carol at 217-356-7331 or email: mr.fang@insightbb.com

Rosy Barbs: Long-finned $2 each, and normals 2 for $1. Call Carie at 217-867-2290 or email dragonfly@illcom.net

Five Easy Steps for the Perfect Spring Pond

by Sue Speichert

Photo by Carie Nixon

No matter where we live, there's always a day or two in spring that are unusually warm and sunny, like the summer days that are just around the corner. Take advantage of those balmy spring days to get your pond into tip-top shape for summer. Take the time now to find and solve those pond problems, before disaster strikes. This summer, you'll be glad you did.

Follow these five simple steps to spruce up your pond so that it's all set for the warm summer months ahead.

1. Check the Pond

First, take a critical look at your pond to see if something's out of place. Inspect your pond edges and take a close look at the water level. Make sure the pond is staying as full as it should. You never know where a small leak or spill can occur. If you've turned off your stream or waterfall for the winter, turn it on and check that everything's all right. A rock might have fallen out of place, or the soil might have settled in along a bog edge.

Clean up all fallen leaves in and around the pond. Use a vacuum to remove any organic debris on the bottom of the pond. We've decided that it's easier to just drain the pond and clean it if there's more than a half-inch of bottom sludge. You'll have to set up a holding tank for your fish, but it's worth the extra effort.

That muck in the pond bottom can harbor and grow many different kinds organisms that can harm the fish and pollute the water. These organisms respond to warming temperatures very quickly and can easily cause diseases and illness in your fish in the spring. The organic matter at the bottom of the pond also acts like a fertilizer to feed algae blooms once the weather and the water starts to warm. Save yourself a lot of agony and headaches later - clean the sludge out of the pond now, before it has a chance to work its summer mischief.

2. Check your Pump and Filter System
Take out your pump and make sure that it's clean and that it's working properly. Look for any cracks in the housing. Make sure the impellers run freely, without being blocked by dead snails or debris. It's amazing how much stuff can find its way into your pump, even when there hasn't been any activity in your pond. You'll be a lot less tense looking for spare or replacement parts now than you will be in the middle of summer when the pond has run dry, the temperature has soared to record levels, and your fish are in a make-shift holding tank in the garage or basement.

Check your filtration system and clean your filter media. If the filter material looks worn or dirty, or if it doesn't clean up well, then replace it with new media. Invest a few dollars now to improve your filter system. It will save you many more dollars this summer when the system will be hard at work combating algae and keeping your water crystal clear and free of ammonia and other harmful chemicals.

Add new beneficial bacteria to your pond. It may not do much when the water temperature is below 50 F. Just the same, it will be there ready to go into action as soon as the water warms. It's especially important to seed your filters with beneficial bacteria early in the spring. Algae begins to grow as soon as the water temperature in the pond rises. Don't wait until your water is green with algae - it will be too hard for your bacteria to catch up. If you use barley straw, add some new straw now so that it will be properly cured for summer. Leave the old barley in the pond for a few weeks or so until the new barley has a chance to begin working.

3. Check the Water Quality
Use a reliable test kit to check your water quality for ammonia, nitrite and nitrate. If you don't have a good test kit, by all means get one. It is a great investment and will spare you from worry and grief throughout the summer. If your readings are not in the proper range, you'll know about it right away and can take the necessary steps now, before your system is completely overwhelmed.

4. Check the Fish
Spring is a very stressful time of year for our pond fish. The water temperatures fluctuate considerably from day to night and from one day to another. The fishes' immune systems may not be up to the task. They have gone for several weeks or months without much food. Their hormones are starting to wake up and they are approaching the annual spring spawn.

Make sure your fish are ready for spring. Check them for any external signs of disease or injury. If they are not healthy, treat them and consider moving them to a quarantine tank until they have recovered. Remove sharp objects such as bricks or cinder blocks from the pond so that the fish do not scratch themselves during spawning.

Some pond-keepers add a small amount of salt to the pond or do a salt dip to give the fish a jump-start toward summer. Specially-formulated chemical treatments for the water, such as Koi Vital, also help pond fish make the transition from winter to summer more easily.

When you should start feeding your fish in the spring depends in large part upon your climate. If the water has been cold and frozen, it's best to wait until the water temperature is consistently above 50 F or 55 F for a few days before you begin to feed the fish. Feed them low protein food, and don't over-feed them. They will enjoy natural foods, too, such as peas, lettuce, or even duckweed. Make sure the food is high in Vitamin C and other nutrients. The fish especially need very nutritious food this time of year.

5. Check the Plants

Water plants that have over-wintered in the pond are starting to wake up for spring. Remove dead leaves from the plants, since the spent foliage will simply decay in the water and become fodder for an algae bloom as well as harboring pests and diseases.

If you moved your lilies, lotus or marginals to the deepest part of the pond to hibernate during the winter, move them up now so that they are closer to the water surface. The spring sun will warm the upper layers of the water first, and the lilies and lotus will start to sprout and grow. This is especially important for plants that don't like to be submerged, such as water forget me not and parrot feather.

Some plants are best transplanted very early in the spring. Iris are often transplanted before they have put out much growth, so that they won't be disturbed as they set flower and bloom. So, too, with lotus, which are best transplanted before they have started to sprout and grow. Most plants, though, can wait to be moved to bigger pots once it's warmer outside. This is easier on the plants, and easier on you too. At least it's a lot warmer.

Hardy water lilies and most marginal water plants may be transplanted when they are actively growing. Spring is the time of year to fertilize plants that are growing early, such as marsh marigold and sweet flag. Wait until the water reaches 65 F before fertilizing waterlilies and lotus. They won't use the food anyway, and the fertilizer may begin to break down prematurely, leaching into the pond and contributing to an algae bloom.

Spring is the ideal time of year to clean and prep your pond for the warm summer months ahead. Check your pond for leaks. Clean up debris in and around your pond. Make sure your pump and filter system are working properly and replace used or worn parts, equipment, or supplies. Look at your fish closely, and give them the good food and good water quality they'll need to make the adjustment from spring through fall. Check your plants, too, moving them to shallower water where they'll get more of the warm spring sun.

Take care of potential problems now, before they have a chance to overtake you and your pond. Make this the summer to remember your pond because of all the fun, relaxation and enjoyment it gave you and your family.

Originally published in **Water Gardening** *magazine, March/April 2000*
Reprinted with permission. Aquarticle

Those Bold and Beautiful Barbs

By Terry Ranson

Long-finned rosy barbs, *Puntius conchonius,* male above. Photo by Phil Nixon.

It's a shame barbs are not:
A) Difficult to keep and breed, and therefore:
B) Very expensive to purchase.
If those two things were true, then barbs would not be so under-rated as aquarium fish.

If you believe I'm overstating this phenomenon, let me share this anecdote. A good friend of mine (an experienced aquarist) observed some black ruby barbs swimming in my living room aquarium. They were adults, and the males had reached their beautiful dark raspberry-red breeding coloration. "What did you do to get them this color?," he asked. When I replied I did nothing special, and that they simply become beautiful when they reached maturity, he accused me of lying! Since the black ruby barbs he'd seen in pet shops were immature, and therefore were not in their prime color, he assumed I must have done something special to get these "plain" fish to look so attractive.

Nearly all the barbs one encounters in pet shops have the same problem: They are nothing to look at until they reach maturity. Once they do,

they become so attractive it's difficult to imagine they are the same fish.

I must stop here and mention there seems to be some confusion as to the Latin nomenclature of barbs. Some authors classify them all as *Barbus*. Other break the family up into *Puntius, Barbodes,* and *Capoeta*. I'm going to do my best to keep them straight, but it's largely a guessing game for a lay person like myself. Also, I should mention I have never liked the cyprinids which get too large for most home aquaria, such as the foot-long tinfoil barb, *Barbus schwanefieldi*, or the bala shark, *Balantiocheilus melanopterus*. This article will not address those large cyprinids.

I have kept a tank exclusively for barbs for at least eight years. Those tanks ranged in size from 29 to 90 gallons. And, importantly, all were heavily planted. Barbs and plants go hand-in-hand, contrary to what you may have heard. The only barb I've seen eat plants was the clown barb, *Barbus everetti,* and even then, it was some soft-leafed water sprite. Plants with tougher leaves, like *Vallisneria*, are generally unharmed.

Besides their beauty and compatibility with plants, the behavior of barbs is something to behold. Cichlid fanciers rave incessantly about the interesting actions of their fishy charges, yet many of those same characteristics can be seen in barbs. I have observed tiger barbs locking jaws almost like cichlids. In fact, the active courtship rituals of most barbs are interesting to watch. Barbs generally scatter their eggs among plants and on the bottom of the tank.

Barbs are in the family Cyprinidae, the largest group of fishes extant, and the group which comprises the carps and minnows, and includes the common goldfish, rasboras and danios. Cyprinids do not have an adipose fin, nor teeth in the jaws—two characteristics which help distinguish them from the tetras. Instead, barbs have grinding teeth and/or a bony plate on their pharyngeal bone which enables them to crush their food.

Barbs have a reputation for chewing on the fins of angelfish and other long-finned species. Since I've never had the desire to mix barbs and angels, I can't comment on this. However, I often mix barbs with danios and loaches, and I've seen only minimal aggression between the different species.

Barbs are largely omnivorous, and dried commercial flakes are eaten with gusto. I like to give mine an occasional treat of bloodworms, mosquito larvae, whiteworms and brine shrimp.

The majority of the barbs of the aquarium hobby come from Asia, with a few from Africa. There are no barbs in South America, where that niche has been taken over by tetras, nor in Australia, New Guinea nor Madagascar.

• My favorite barb is the common Tiger Barb, *Capoeta tetrazona*. It is one of the best schooling fishes, and always provides the foundation for my barb aquariums.

• Running a close second is the Black Ruby Barb, *Barbus nigrofasciatus*.

There are far too many barbs to write about them all here, so I'll just touch on a few more of my favorites:

• The Striped or Zebra Barb, *Barbodes fasciatus*, is one of the more unusual barbs. Reaching the length of nearly five inches, this fish has black horizontal stripes on a yellow background. I'm not certain about this, but I believe these barbs take the cichlid-like approach of pairing off and eventually killing the other striped barbs in the tank. I do know that when I keep an odd number, only a male and female survive.

• Cherry Barbs, *Capoeta titteya*, have everything going for them. Small, with a beautiful cherry-red coloration, they are peaceful, long-lived and school well.

• The Gold Barb, *Puntius semifasciolatus*, are perhaps the most underrated barb of all. I don't know how many times I've been asked, "What's that pretty, yellow fish?," only to surprise the inquirer by telling them it is the plain, ugly little barb they see every time they go to a pet shop.

• There are so many man-made varieties of the Rosy Barb, *Puntius conchonius*, it's hard to pick a favorite. I like the bright red, long-finned variety. However, the recently-imported golden yellow variety is also quite attractive.

• I've already mentioned the Clown Barb, *Barbus everetti*, as a potential plant eater. Of all the barbs I've kept, this one needs the most heat, and is the most likely to get sick if chilled. It is one of the larger barbs, and when mature, resembles a four-inch version of a koi.

• The Arulius Barb, *Barbus arulius*, is what I consider to be the discus of the barb world. It is a seldom seen, four-inch beauty with a purple sheen and vertical black bars. Males have a dorsal fin that sports filaments which extend nearly to the caudal fin in older specimens. It can be kept in groups.

I've barely scratched the surface of all there is to know about this readily available group of fishes, but it's not hard to tell I'm a big fan of barbs. I invite other aquarists to begin looking at them more seriously. After all, we need to start keeping something beside African cichlids, angelfish and discus!

From Vol. 1, No. 8 The Newsletter of The Tri-State Aquarium Society July 1999
Aquarticles

Odessa Barb, *Puntius ticto*.
Photo by Phil Nixon.

Map to Kleiss Nursery