



Building on the Basics—Getting Pond Construction Right

In spring, a young man’s fancy may turn to love, but gardeners dream of warm days, fresh dirt and flowing water. Sometimes the “fancy” is actually a fantasy—on cold and snowy days, we stare out the window and dream about what we want to do with the landscape and the problem spots. We start

poring over plant catalogs and driving by our favorite garden centers to check the level of activity. Water gardeners dream about what the ultimate pond and waterfall *could* be like.

If you are one of those water garden dreamers—and are planning to take action as soon as the weather permits—the February meeting of the St. Louis Water Gardening Society is just for you. Clearly, you can’t yet get out the shovels and start digging in the frozen tundra. But this is a perfect time to draw up plans, set budgets, look at equipment and think about plants

and fish. How big can it be? How many fish will it support? Is your proposed site a good one? Is it in sun or shade? The best ponds take all those things into account up front to avoid problems later.



Aaron Burchett

Don’t Miss This!

What: “Pond Construction”

Where: Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125

When: Tuesday, February 22, 7 p.m.

Who: Aaron Burchett, The Pond Market

Aaron Burchett, vice president and part owner of Pond Market, which was established in 1997, can address some of those questions and point you in the right direction for more.

Burchett began building and maintaining garden ponds in the late 1990s. Most of his experience has come from performing fieldwork, maintenance and pond construction for residential and commercial customers.

Burchett has worked extensively with most pond products now on the market, and he has experience in both installation and repairs. He provides seminars and presentations for koi and water garden clubs nationally. His company website is www.pondmarket.com.

Don’t Forget—SLWGS Meetings Have a New Temporary Home



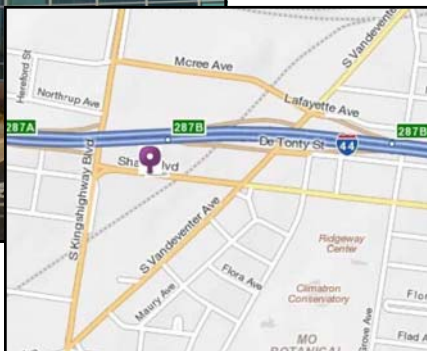
The Missouri Botanical Garden is getting a new roof on the atrium of the Ridgeway Center. And, because the renovations are extensive, all groups that use the building for night meetings have been moved to other locations through May 2011. The St. Louis Water

Gardening Society is meeting at the Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, a new facility for the Missouri Botanical Garden. The building is at the intersection

of Kingshighway and Shaw Avenue, but is accessed from Shaw. It is located directly across Shaw from O’Connell’s Pub.

The easiest way to reach the Commerce Bank Center for Science Education is to exit I-44 from east or west at S. Vandeventer Avenue and go south to Shaw. Turn right and go across the railroad tracks to the west parking lot entrance. Use the west entrance doors to get to classroom #125. For your GPS system, the complete address is 4651 Shaw Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110.

The meetings will return to the Ridgeway Center in June.



Water Lilies for Low-Light Conditions

Tropical water lilies love to be in full sun for most of a long summer day. But if you have a pond that is in shade for part of the day, you can still enjoy the bright colors and large blossoms



Nymphaea Daubeniana, above, commonly known as *N. Dauben*, is a tropical, day-blooming, viviparous water lily that was first hybridized in 1864. 'Viviparous' means that new plants grow on the leaves of the lily. *Dauben* is one of several varieties that can do well in St. Louis summers, even with lower levels of sunlight.

produced by tropical varieties, said Steve Harris, a St. Louis Water Gardening Society member who has been a volunteer at the Jewel Box for several years.

One of the advantages of being a Jewel Box volunteer is that you get to be 'up close and personal' with all the aquatic plants in the St. Louis Water Gardening Society collection each year, and to become familiar with their habits and habitats. Harris has developed an expertise on water lilies that thrive in the St. Louis area.

At the last SLWGS meeting, a member asked

Harris about lilies that he might use in his pond, which does not get full sun for much of the day.

"I told him that most water lilies do best in full sun, but that there are a few that will bloom even if they don't get a high amount of sun. I suggested he try *Dauben*, but there are others," Harris said.

He suggested the group shown here as the best tropical lilies for lower light conditions. All of the lilies in this group are day-blooming and viviparous, meaning that the plants reproduce themselves on their own leaves. Two are pigmy varieties—smaller plants overall that would work well in smaller ponds.

(Note: All water lilies are botanically classified as *nymphaea*. Names are generally shown with a capital N. before the name.)

Here is Harris' list of water lilies that should do okay in lower light conditions:

- *N. Dauben*, a light blue pigmy lily, shown at left, is properly named *N. Daubeniana*.
- *N. Patricia*, a pink pigmy variety is at upper right.
- *N. Independence*, shown second in the column at right, is hot pink. It is officially named *N. Mrs. Robert Sawyer*, but also is known and sold as *N. Independence* or *N. Independence Pink*.
- Next down, *N. August Koch*, is a lavender blue, star shaped bloom that was first identified in a Missouri Botanical Garden Report.
- Fourth at right is *N. Panama Pacific* is purple and blooms are star shaped.
- Last in the column is *N. Blue Bird*, which has a deep cup and flat pads.

Of course, if your pond has plenty of sun for most of the day, your choices of tropical and hardy lilies is much wider. You can view dozens of varieties and learn more about their habits at www.victoria-adventure.com.

Another good source of information is the International Water Lily and Water Gardening Society (IWGS) website, www.iwgs.org. There is a wealth of information about lily varieties as well as news reports concerning legislation on aquatic plants and hybridizing developments. You also will find a IWGS membership form. You can join the organization now without cost.

And don't forget your hands-on learning opportunity at our own Jewel Box. The work season begins April 30. See you there!



N. Patricia, a pigmy day-blooming variety.



N. Mrs. Robert Sawyer, also known as *Independence* or *Independence Pink*.



N. August Koch, noted in a 1922 report in the *Missouri Botanical Garden Bulletin*.



N. Panama Pacific, 1914, is a purple star-shaped day blooming variety.



N. Blue Bird, 1914, has a deep blue cup and flat, olive green pads.



Thanks, Gail! For six years, Gail Abernathy served as the SLWGS treasurer, keeping us on the road to financial stability. The board of directors decided she needed a little more than just a 'thank you.' For one who likes saving money—and watching fish—a ceramic bank shaped as one of her favorite creatures seemed an appropriate gift. It was presented by Dave Stahre, president of the Society, at the January meeting. So Gail will have something to put in the bank—and in her pond, come spring—we also gave Gail a gift certificate that she can spend as she wishes at Best of Nature.





Presidential Ponderings

Well, folks, we're off and running for 2011! The January meeting (held in our temporary new "digs" down the street from the main part of the Garden) featured a presentation by the always fun Jamie Beyer from Boone, Iowa. Jamie talked about "patina" a.k.a. "that important slime around your pond."

Pointing out the benefits of this slimy layer in your pond is a passion of his. There is a summary of Jamie's remarks on page 5. His article on the topic also is posted on our website, www.slwgs.org, under the tab "Articles of Interest." If you missed the meeting, or had unanswered questions, you can catch up there.

We are meeting in temporary quarters for the first part of the year. We are in classroom #125 of the Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, located at 4651 Shaw Ave. (essentially at the corner of Shaw and Kingshighway).

The layout of the room took a little getting used to, but we managed to find spots for all our functions. The membership table was set up "in the round" outside the meeting room. Jeanne Lehr found a strategic corner at the rear of the room for the library and Sophia Cluck configured the hospitality tables to serve refreshments. The building is very nice, and while the room is smaller than we are used to, it is certainly adequate. I think these quarters will serve us well until we move back to the old setting in June.

The meeting this month will feature Aaron Burchett from Pond Market discussing pond construction. Come on out, and get inspiration on how to build your "new" pond! Actually I always get pointers from these presentations on how to improve mine.

Most of the programs are set for the rest of the year. In March we will be discussing spring start-up issues. We're still looking for a "fish expert." Anyone interested?

Check the calendar of events on page 4 for particulars of upcoming meetings. These, too, are listed on our website.

In addition to the regular meetings, we have a number of special events planned. Sometime this summer we are planning an overnight field trip to a koi farm. We also are looking into the possibility of holding a koi auction. If you are looking for some quality fish, let us know what you would like to see at such an auction.

We are gearing up for Pond-O-Rama. If you would like to have your water feature on the tour, the forms for hosts to fill out are on the website or are available from Alice Gibson at alice1628@att.net. The Pond-O-Rama planning committee will be meeting at 6 p.m., just prior to regular meetings and in the same place, from now until the tour to get (and keep!) everything organized. We can always use extra help and ideas, so come on out and join the fun.

Okay folks, I'm tired of winter. I've had enough of this white precipitation! We got another ice storm and down went my netting and frame! I guess either further bracing is needed or I need to take the netting down when ice is forecast. I miss my little buddies. I get an occasional glimpse of them through the ice. I wonder what the fish "think" about?

I'm looking forward to my spring conversations with "Sammy" the snake (a real snake, not a Mafioso!) about his participation in the witness protection program (hiding from my wife and her rake.) Considering the trouble he was in last year, he'll be lucky to live another.

Here's looking forward to a fun and productive year. As I've said before, I'm proud of this organization and honored to be your president. Keep up the good work, get involved and let's have some fun!

Dave Stahre



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St. Louis Water Gardening Society Calendar of Events 2011

Membership meetings in 2011 will be held on the dates listed below at the Missouri Botanical Garden, between 7 and 9 p.m. on the **FOURTH TUESDAY** of each month unless otherwise noted, and at the locations listed.

February 22—Pond-O-Rama organizing committee meeting, 6 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125.

February 22—"Pond Construction," **Aaron Burchett**, The Pond Market, 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125.

March 1—SLWS Board of Directors meeting at the home of Joan Woelfel, 1064 Charolais Drive, Ballwin, MO 63011, 7 p.m. All members welcome to attend

March 22—"Panel of Experts: Spring Startup," (panel members to be announced.) 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125.

April 26—"Understanding and Avoiding KHV and the Other Koi and Goldfish Viruses," **Dr. Andrew Goodwin, PhD**, Fish Pathologist/Inspector, University of Arkansas/Pine Bluff, 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125.

April 30—First **Jewel Box** work day of the season to retrieve and place hardy lilies in the reflecting pools.

May 24—"Pond Macroinvertebrates: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly," **Dennis Campbell**, Lincoln College, 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Commerce Bank Center for Science Education, Room #125.

June 14—**Pond-O-Rama host meeting**, 7 p.m. Missouri Botanical Garden, Ridgeway Center, Beaumont Room.

June 21—"Goldfish in America," **Peter Ponzio**, certified judge, Associated Koi Clubs of America (AKCA), 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Ridgeway Center, Beaumont Room. Note: This is a **THIRD TUESDAY**.

June 25-26—The 11th annual Pond-O-Rama pond and garden tour. Sign up now to be a part of it. Contact Alice Gibson, alice1628@att.net, or look for forms at our website www.slwgs.org.

July 19—**Annual SLWGS Auction**, 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Ridgeway Center, Beaumont Room. Donations needed. Note: This is a **THIRD TUESDAY**.

August 16—**Annual Awards Banquet**, "The Multifaceted and Enchanting Lotus: From Ancient Myths to your Backyard," **Paula Biles**, author and lotus expert, at the Jewel Box in Forest Park. Note: This is a **THIRD TUESDAY**.

September 27—"Panel of Experts: Fall Shutdown." Panel to be determined. 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Ridgeway Center, Beaumont Room.

October 25—"Trees and Shrubs for Moist Areas," **Cindy Gilberg**, horticulturist and garden consultant, 7 p.m., Missouri Botanical Garden, Ridgeway Center, Beaumont Room.





Did You Miss This?

Taking Care of Your 'Patina'

All ponds and water features will develop patina—it is what you do with it that is important to proper pond management, says Jamie Beyer of Midwest Waterscapes in Boone, Iowa. Beyer was the featured speaker at the January meeting of the St. Louis Water Gardening Society, and growing and protecting pond patina is one of his favorite topics.

Patina, he says is “a layer of life in an aquatic ecosystem.” Beyer says it grows on rocks, liners, plants, pots—everything in the water, and to a lesser extent, even in the water.

Most of us think of the patina more as that green slime that is on everything. Beyer says he dislikes the word “slime” because, while it may be descriptive, “it denotes a negative connotation to this very important element in our ecosystems.” While our tendency is to wash it away, rather than protect it, Beyer insists that we not only should take good care of what we have, he can suggest ways to grow it faster in newly established ponds.

The patina layer is the ecosystem’s natural biological filter. Bacteria is a primary component of the patina, but not the only one. “I say that ‘critters’ of all kinds make up a large component of a pond’s patina,” he said. “These critters are invertebrates of all kinds. Some are visible to the naked eye, and some are so small that a magnifying lens is needed to see them,” he said. The number and range of these critters is huge—tens of thousands of species have been identified. “Critters like amoebas, worms, rotifers, aquatic insects and

Continued on page 7



The thoughtful and always expressive Jamie Beyer, of Midwest Waterscapes in Boone, Iowa, held forth on one of his favorite topics—pond patina—at the January meeting of the St. Louis Water Gardening Society. Beyer’s two articles on the topic are now available on our website, www.slwgs.org, under the “Articles of Interest” tab.


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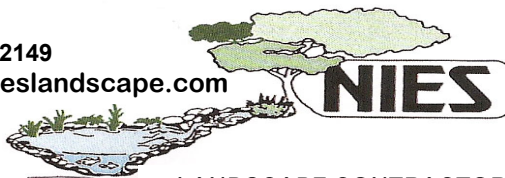
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Water Word is published by the St. Louis Water Gardening Society 10-11 times annually, and is distributed to all members. The newsletter contains information about water gardening and fish-keeping, as well as information about SLWGS meetings and activities. Contributions of articles and photos are welcome and should be sent to the Water Word editor listed below. Documents should be in common text formats, and photos should be in high resolution (300 dpi or higher) jpeg format. The deadline for submissions is the first of each month.

SLWGS membership dues are \$20 annually per household. Information about the Society, including how to join, can be found at our website, www.slwgs.org or from any of the officers, board members or coordinators listed below.

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Taking Care of Your 'Patina'

(Continued from page 5)

their larvae are just some examples.”

Another important component is algae—yes, he said, there are good species of algae out there. “Patina algae provides a substrate for the critters to adhere to. They live there and some forms of invertebrates will even graze on this type of algae.” Without this kind of algae, “critters don’t have a foothold to hang on to,” he said.

While all established water gardens have a patina, some have more than others, says Beyer. It is possible to encourage patina to grow and prosper. You can add bacteria to your pond, especially a new installation. “Adding higher forms of plants like water lilies and marginal plants will provide more and a different kind of substrate for patina to grow,” he said.

You can borrow or buy a bucket of “muck” from a friend or neighbor who has a mature and healthy water garden and add it to your pond. Be sure it is healthy. “Healthy muck will smell like dirt—earth. Bad muck will smell like rotten eggs,” he said.

If you are borrowing muck, put 4” to 5” in the bottom of a bucket, then keep it stirred and aerated on the trip home.

Finally, give the patina time to grow—it will occur faster in warmer climates, he said. As in terrestrial gardens, succession takes place in water gardens. “The first plants that show up are the annual weeds, the planktonic algae.” It is generally recognized as pea green, soupy water.

“In time, the more perennial weed, string algae, will arrive.” The string algae compete for nutrients the planktonic algae needs to survive. Less pea green soup water and more string algae will be the result.

Establishing water lilies and other plants, and the addition of bacteria brings on the third stage of succession. The string algae will have a harder time gaining a foothold. The fourth and final

stage is the arrival of invertebrates.

Once you have a healthy growth of patina, how do you take care of it and protect it? Beyer offers eight suggestions for proper pond management.

1. Insure that you have good oxygen levels throughout the entire pond in both summer and winter. Increase circulation and decrease “dead zones” where there is little water circulation. Take potential dead zones into account as you design your pond—the design cannot usually be easily changed after the fact.

2. Do not power wash or scrub your pond. This will remove patina and do major damage to the ecosystem. It is okay to gently spray the patina with a garden hose.

3. Keep organic load from accumulating to excessive amounts. Remove leaves, dead vegetation and anything that has died from the pond.

4. Add water lilies, marginal and submerged plants. They are important to proper pond management.

5. Do not overstock with fish or overfeed the fish you have.

6. Do not let a pond’s patina dry out. Shutting off the stream for even an hour or two in summer can be lethal to the patina that is growing in the water. Pond cleanouts also can be lethal to the patina if it is allowed to dry. As you work on the cleanout, gently spray water from a garden hose onto the sides of the pond and the rocks where patina is present.

7. Do not add any chemical or soaps that kill critters or algae.

8. Add surface area to be colonized by patina. This can be done by adding a stream or adding to the length of an existing stream. Adding rock to a rockless pond can double or triple the surface area to be colonized by patina. Do not add rock to the very bottom of the pond, but definitely add stone to the sides and the first shelf. Add a biological filter if you think the organic load is higher than normal. A biological filter is a huge home for a pond’s patina to grow.

“To sum up,” Beyer said, “to be a successful pond owner you do everything in your power to allow a pond’s patina to grow. Practice proper pond management and you will have a much more enjoyable water garden with much less work.”



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Switch Hitter—Ask Laura Lynne

(continued from page 10)

the children?" "Oh sure" the other person says because truly it has never occurred to them that you are missing from every family photo.

3. LET GO—You must be willing to show another being how to press the button on your camera equipment and trust they will not drop your new lens.

3. TRUST—This also applies to perfect strangers on the street, knowing they will not do the 50 yard dash and head to the hills with your Canon.

4. MORE IS BETTER—It is vital that you have them take several shots. When I did this at a funeral recently and someone showed up who was not a family member, seemed the perfect choice for the photographer. Wrong, he cut off our heads, arms and important people in the picture. Also people often get nervous so they move. Ask for at least three pictures and be bold about it.

5. LEARN TO RECEIVE—Remember how good you feel when someone asks you to help document their family vacation or when you offer and they gleefully say "Wow that would be

great to have all of us together."

It's what family is about. People feel good when they can give to you, just like you feel good giving to them.

6. BE THE STAR—You are the creator of your water or flower garden and your beautiful image should be part of what is growing along with the wonder in the background. It's a manuscript of your history.

7. PLAY WITH PICTURES – Now you get to share with your friends and send them real life images of what is happening in your world with you in it. After all they love you and want to see you along with the rest of the family!

So quit hiding and let someone take the reins for you. I did, with my new tractor. I had to get over my fear of being on the other side of the camera and ask the salesman who delivered it to take a picture of me. It felt so needy and self centered, but I wanted documentation and my dogs were going to be of no help. Try it this month, hand it over and show up for those who love you. Let's see where your mug lands.



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Ozark Witch Hazel

(Continued from page 9)

recommended because she is slow growing and usually will develop a naturally dense habit with age if not overcrowded or environmentally challenged.

If, over time, suckers begin to develop at her base/ground level, consider the space allowance and remove only what is necessary to maintain a visual balance for the space. She is very long lived when well placed and can eventually create a stunning colony if given enough time to mature.

Flowers develop on the old growth so consider only a gentle pruning, if any, soon after flowering to modify her shape. This is best done in the early spring after flowering and before any new growth appears. Usually a conservative approach is recommended.

She is rather newly introduced for use in cultivated space, so placement, applications and pruning management recommendations may differ depending on landscape styles and spaces. At this time there has been some creative formative pruning resulting in some espalier forms which will require slightly more pruning management!

All pruning should be delayed till she is past any transplant shock. At that point she may have filled out naturally and not require any pruning. Also remember flowering is likely to be affected with any pruning management approach. As with any shrub, never remove more than 1/3 of the total growth.

Mary Ann Fink is a life-long horticulture practitioner and green industry representative. She shares her best management practices, known as "Show Me Smart Gardening," with professional horticulturists. Fink appreciates the functional and ornamental aspects of native plants for the lower Midwest and encourages their use in the cultivated landscape. She can be reached at maryann@maryannfink.com.



Ozark Witch Hazel: A Magic Moment Maker



Mary Ann Fink

January is an unlikely flowering period for native shrubs, but this is NOT a trick. It is rather a great winter blooming option! *Hamamelis vernalis*—Ozark Witch Hazel—is sometimes hard to find but easy to appreciate. Perhaps the real trick is placement. When you plant one, be sure to locate her in the landscape where you can appreciate her sweet confetti-like flowers, despite the snow and January’s miserable cold!

(It seems I have lost my winter hardiness—cold hurts!)

This native shrub does not rely on any secret potion to burst into bloom at the drabest time of the year—she does it naturally! Selecting between a cultivar or the straight species—

for me—would be the only “witchy” part!

My best recommendation is to go right now while the sun is shining and the cold feels almost tolerable to the Missouri Botanical Garden and see for yourself which “witch” would best fit your needs.

There are two species native to North America on display—the Ozark witch hazel, *H. vernalis*, shown here, and *H. virginiana*, the eastern witch hazel. The eastern variety blooms in the fall, with fragrant, rust-colored flowers. But the Ozark varieties bloom in late winter, often retaining their leaves.

Now that there is finally some awareness of this shrub’s durability there is a “growing interest” for breeders to work with this species. New hybrid crosses and some selections have brought interesting color variations, even one with somewhat purple foliage.

There is also some bragging rights about flower size and fall color variations. (So I guess I should recommend another trip in the fall if this is important!) Recently a weeping form made it to market. Be sure to take a note pad, pen, map of the Garden and a camera!

There does appear to be some difference in leaf drop as well. Some witch hazels do a better job of showcasing their flowers against clean bare stems but a few have leaves that linger. This makes it difficult to really appreciate the rather small but fun strappy flowers.

If fragrance is important to you, know that *Hamamelis vernalis* can have a wonderful sweet lemon scent that drifts and hovers in the vicinity of the flowers. I found it easiest to appreciate the delightful fragrance from a short distance in fairly still air. It was nearly impossible to detect with my nose buried in the bush!

Care Factor Rating: 1-2 depending on which form is selected. Ozark witch hazel must be watered regularly till she is established. A moderately slow grower, she maintains her natural branching habit with minimal pruning. Removal of the occasional damaged or dead branch can be done any time of the year.

Because of her look in a natural setting, it might be tempting to prune her to encourage a denser branching habit. This seems especially true if in her youth if she appears to be slightly willowy or thinly branched. Use caution, only a light hand is



The Ozark Witch Hazel—Hamamelis vernalis—provides a winter surprise, blooming in winter’s cold. It has a wonderful sweet lemon scent that drifts and hovers in and around the flowers.

*Like Sending Flowers?
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The Jewel Box Lily Collection



The collection features original photographs of the lilies grown in the Jewel Box pools in Forest Park. There are 12 different images on matte finish cards, blank inside, 6-1/2" x 3-3/4" with envelopes. The reverse of each card contains a description of the lily on front. The proceeds help support the civic project at the Jewel Box. To order send e-mail to alice1628@att.net.
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Sign Up Now for Pond-O-Rama 2011. Host and advertising forms are now available on our website, www.slwgs.org.

Ask Laura Lynne—Photo Tips for the Artist in You

Switch Hitter

Are you always THE photographer? If so you know exactly what I mean. If not then you will barely notice what this article is about—other than the title makes you think of baseball and that sounds good in February. If you are the photographer in your entire family, then everyone has a photo history in your heirloom album from birth to their last breath.



Nature girl (Laura Lynne) on her tractor, a Kubota L3700!

Holidays are exquisitely documented by YOU. You know innately how to be there for the perfect shot and you are the coordinator to gather the entire clan into a semi-circle of smiles while you click. *Viola!*

Ah but where are you? What shade of blonde were you in 1992? Were you wearing trendy

boots or the replica sweater from the prior year? I realized that there are some events that are supposed to be all about me that I cannot be in unless my body shows up on the screen. The advent of timers on most cameras was created by those who are never in the picture. Today there is truly no excuse why you cannot include yourself in the photo.

If necessary, find yourself a switch hitter to act for you. Here is how it works:

1. ASK—Gain the courage to ask for what you want...it sounds like this..."Would you please take a picture of me with

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Laura Lynne Dyer is a professional photographer and owner of Laura Lynne Designs, Inc. She designs outdoor excursions for her clients, always thinking about the photographic opportunities she creates while installing her works of art. Visit her website at www.lauralynnedesigns.com.