

Texas 'White List' Update Among Symposium Talks

Wednesday, September 1, 2010, 4:40 p.m. EDT

A presentation by a Texas government official on the status of the state's planned "white list" of aquatic plants acceptable for sale is quite possibly the most anticipated talk at the upcoming IWGS Annual Symposium, Sept. 16-19, in San Angelo, Texas. Organized by the International Waterlily and Water Garden Society, the event will feature four days of seminars, discussions, tours and other events.

Due to its potential impact on the water garden and aquarium industries in Texas, the white list update is expected to attract a great deal of interest from industry members attending the event. Tentatively scheduled for Friday, Sept. 17 at 2 p.m., Dr. Earl Chilton II, director of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's Aquatic habitat Enforcement Program, will discuss the white list, including how it will be monitored, how it will affect aquatic plant businesses and hobbyists and how new plants can be added to the list. Plants on the list would be considered safe for sale in Texas; non-listed plants would be subject to sales restrictions, including bans.

Water garden industry members, including Rolf Nelson of Nelson Water Gardens and Nursery in Katy, Texas, are very concerned that the Texas white list will curtail sales in Texas and serve as a blueprint for other states concerned with potentially invasive outbreaks of aquatic species. Moreover, the Texas white list could force business changes, such as requiring nurseries to bulldoze crops of aquatic plants left off the list or maintenance firms to confiscate such plants from water gardens during routine repotting efforts, according to Nelson.

As of early May, IWGS executive director Larry Nau reported that the proposed white list would allow the sale of only three waterlily varieties starting in January 2011.

Essentially, the state of Texas created a risk assessment process for aquatic plants designed to allow it to place plants on the white list if "a) there is a strong history of trade in Texas, it has a high agricultural or other economic value, and there have been repeated introductions without establishment or evidence of invasiveness, or b) there is a long history of survival in Texas without invasiveness and there is economic benefit."

Government officials informed Nelson, who spearheaded the water garden industry's response to the white list initiative, that "nearly all species that are sold commercially at present will be on the list" and that it is not the department's "intention to put anyone out of business."

Other planned speakers for the IWGS Annual Symposium include Deb Spencer of Water's Edge, Kelly Billing of Maryland Aquatic Nurseries and Anita Nelson of Nelson on unusual techniques and plants for water gardens; Demi Fortuna of Danner/PondMaster on sizing pumps; Gary Jones of Mars Fishcare on water quality; Brandon McLane of Florida Aquatic Nursery and Ken Landon on hybridizing; Daiké Tian, Ph.D., of the South China Botanical Garden on lotus in China; David Curtright on botanical Latin; Tom Graham on koi; Billing on aquatic plant rafts; and Landon on storing waterlily tubers and seeds.

Planned events include receptions, a silent auction, dinner/fireworks at the International Waterlily Collection (more than 200 varieties of waterlily on display) at Civic League Park, San Angelo's Lilyfest celebration, the IWGS's annual banquet and a pond tour. Organizeers also planned the dedication of *Nymphaea* 'Queen Jill' and an exhibit featuring aquatic plants at the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts.

The IWGS expects attendees from China, Thailand, Korea, Australia, Mexico and the United Kingdom — as well as the United States — to attend the event. For more information, visit www.iwgs.org.

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