Brief History of Tregaron’s Lily Pond

Tregaron’s Lily Pond and gardens were designed in 1915 by Ellen Biddle Shipman, who went on to become one of the leading landscape architects of her era. Shipman was a pioneering woman in the field, designing over 650 gardens across the United States. Tregaron is the largest and only remaining example of Shipman’s “wild gardens,” and is a national landmark.

The land now owned by the Tregaron Conservancy fell into a state of severe neglect beginning in 1958. From the 1980s to mid-2000s, there were many proposals for large-scale housing developments on this land. They were defeated by a determined group of neighbors and DC’s strong historic preservation laws.

In 2006, the land was donated to the non-profit Tregaron Conservancy to own and steward for the benefit of the public. Thanks to our supporters, volunteers, and neighboring partner, Washington International School, the Conservancy has worked tirelessly to rehabilitate and maintain the Lily Pond, wild gardens, woodlands, fields, and footpaths.

Restoring the Lily Pond, 2009 - Today

Over the years that the land was neglected, Shipman’s wild gardens became choked with vines. Plants withered and many were lost. Large trees fell across the paths. Erosion buried the historic stone footpaths.

The Lily Pond became a mud pit filled with trash and invasive plants. Its cobblestone edges crumbled. It became an unwelcoming place for visitors and wildlife.

The Conservancy completely rebuilt the Lily Pond in 2009. A new concrete lining was created. The original cobblestones were restored. New Shipman-inspired aquatic plants, the spillway, bridge and bubbler were added. Since that time, the Conservancy has continued to add -- and carefully tends to -- new gardens, stairways and footpaths. And the wildlife has returned!

For more information, including ways to support Tregaron, visit Tregaron.org

Thank you for visiting!
Meet the Tregaron Pond Fauna

**American Bullfrog** in the Lily Pond waiting to catch a mosquito for dinner. Bullfrogs are territorial and most active from May to July.

**American Black Duck** (female shown) drinking pond water. They arrive in late winter and spring. Visit Tregaron.org to see more of our birds!

**Goldfish** swim in schools across the pond.

*Fun fact:* Goldfish see more colors than humans!

**Common Water Snake** nestled in our aquatic plants. This snake is not venomous, and when it’s not in or near the pond, enjoys sunning itself in our meadows.

Frequently Asked Questions

**Why is the water brown-ish?**
Leaves and branches fall into the pond and decompose, and soil erodes into the pond during rainfall, making it murky.

**Why do the frogs croak?**
The male bullfrogs croak to mark their territory against other males and to attract female bullfrogs.

**What happens to the animals during the winter?**
Frogs and goldfish hibernate in the pond. Some frogs hibernate nearby in mud. Ducks return in early spring. Snakes hibernate in a nearby nest.

**Why is there a bubbler and when does it run?**
The pond bubbler circulates nutrients and oxygen for the health of pond organisms. It runs for 12 hours every night.

Lily Pond Rules

The Lily Pond is a great place to observe wildlife and relax, but please follow the Conservancy’s rules:

- No fishing with nets, rods or jars
- No touching or catching wildlife
- No throwing things into the pond
- No dog swimming
- Do not pull, walk on, or disturb plants
- Stay on paths

Thank you for helping us care for Tregaron Conservancy’s wildlife and plants!