

# Water Gardens

Scenery, serenity on tap for tour of ponds

BY JONATHAN RICK  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Gisela and Heiko Spallek have a getaway in their yard in Pine.

"We try not to go on vacation in the summer because we have our little paradise outside the front door," says Gisela, 38.

The one-acre "work of art," as Gisela calls it, is lushly arrayed with vegetable gardens, a pergola, flowers, a waterfall, landscaped lighting and waterlilies. Home to koi, goldfish, frogs, tadpoles, mussels and salamanders, the pond brims with life and is a continuous fountain of adventure for the couple's two children.

The property is one of 15 featured as part of the Second Annual Parade of Ponds today and Sunday in Butler and Allegheny counties. The event is also a fund-raiser. Each homeowner has chosen one of 10 charities that the suggested donation of \$20 will benefit.

The Spalleks came to America from eastern Germany in 1996. They settled in Pine in 2001, and by April 2002, they had a \$47,000 water garden inhabiting the back yard. The Spalleks' little paradise also graces the cover of a coffee-table book published in July, "Water Garden Lifestyles: Exploring Water Features across North America" (Aquascape Lifestyle Books, \$39.99).

What's more, says Gisela, "Mowing the lawn is much more work than maintaining the pond."

According to Pine-based



Waterlilies fill the Spalleks' pond.

landscapers Kenneth P. Soergel Associates, which designed and constructed the Spalleks' garden, average prices range from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The water gardens on the tour were installed by Soergel Associates.

A third-generation landscaper, Kevin Soergel, the owner of Soergel Associates, says he worked in the family business from junior high school to college, and the summers in between.

"I think it was in my blood to landscape. It's a love and a passion. ... I'm in the business of making people happy," he says.

The Spalleks were so proud of their property that they created a video of it, which, along with pictures, they display on their Web site, [www.spallek.net/pond/](http://www.spallek.net/pond/).

The sentiment is familiar to Donna and Matt Mattessa, who

## Second Annual Parade of Ponds

**When:** 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. today, noon to 6 p.m. Sunday.

**Admission:** Suggested donation is \$20 per family. Tickets available online; through any of the charities; at Soergel Orchards, 2573 Brandt School Road, Franklin Park; and at Lifelines Bookstore, 12121 Perry Highway, in the lobby of North Way Community Church.

**Benefits:** Proceeds go directly to the charities, which include the local chapter of the Sierra Club, St. Ferdinand's Catholic Church in Cranberry and CONTACT Pittsburgh. Patrons can choose which they want to support.

**Where:** Northern Allegheny and southern Butler counties.

**Details:** 724-443-1051 or [www.yourescapes.net](http://www.yourescapes.net).

own another Soergel water garden in Forward, Butler County.

"Doing yard work is no longer a chore," Matt says.

The Mattessas' two ponds include a four-foot waterfall and koi and goldfish. Installed last fall and set against a two-story home in the style of an old farmhouse, the garden envelops onlookers with natural beauty and tranquility.

"We just enjoy the sounds of running water and fish," Matt says.

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PHOTOS: GISELA AND HEIKO SPALLEK

**Above:** Gisela and Heiko Spallek's one-acre water garden features fish, falls and a pergola.



**Left:** A waterfall spills over rocks in the Spalleks' garden.