

WATER GARDEN PLANTS

Water garden plants will live in many different areas of your aqua scape. Some have leaves that float freely and gracefully on the water's surface and are not tethered by a pot. Others desire only wet feet and live on the shoreline or the shallow areas of a pond. These plants are called bog plants or marginals as they are placed on the *margin* of the pond typically in 2 - 6 inches of water. Yet others prefer to be potted and totally submerged in the water, either sitting on the bottom of the pond or raised slightly by being placed on bricks or rocks with their leaves floating up towards the surface. Another type of water plant is available in bunches, gathered together and bound by a small weight. When placed in the pond they will sink to the bottom and are excellent oxygenating plants if you have fish in your pond or water feature. Or if you desire, they may be potted and placed on the bottom of the pond. They also provide a spawning area for fish and a hiding area for fry until they are big enough to fend for themselves.

Irrespective of the size of your water garden, from a tub on your deck or patio to the open water of a large pond, there are plants to satisfy all of your needs.

By recognizing the habits of water plants and selecting the appropriate variety for the appropriate place you can enjoy a beautiful, virtually labor free pond. As is the mantra of the Master Gardener's....."Right plant, right place"!

Tips on successfully raising water plants:

- When you purchase water plants, please make certain there is water in the bag for the trip home. They need to be kept wet.
- Some water plants are tropical and will not survive through winter. You will either need to winter them over in a warm area, such as your garage, or they must be replaced each year.
- Water plants will need to be fertilized, pruned and repotted regularly in order to remain healthy and vigorous.
- Plan to cover approximately 60% of your water surface with plant material. This decreases green water caused by algae. It also gives any frogs, goldfish or koi shelter from predators and provides cooler water in which to escape the hot summer sun.
- Most water plants thrive if fertilized in the spring with a good aquatic fertilizer tablet/pellet pushed into their soil.
- For those plants needing to be potted, the most inexpensive way to repot them is to purchase the old-fashioned *unscented, clay* kitty litter (non-clumpable). Simply place some litter in a bucket, wet it and scoop it out to pot the plant. Cover the newly planted surface with pea gravel to avoid having the "soil" leach into the water. Or you can use a pot liner such as burlap or a landscaping cloth in the pot before you fill it (Do NOT use soils with peat moss, perlite or any chemical additives as they will harm your aquatic friends in the pond.) You do not need special aquatic containers for planting. Those black plastic pots that regular nursery plants come in are fine--and free!

- Most water plants enjoy a sunny location to thrive, so chose their place in your pond carefully.
- As your plants grow, keep them tidy by trimming off any dead or diseased plant matter, carefully deadhead spent flowers to promote continued blooming and skim out floaters that cover too much surface area of the pond.
- Think about adding goldfish, koi or frogs to your pond as they are a colorful and frequently comical addition. Fish add sparkle and movement like nothing else! They also eat, and thus reduce, many insect pests.

Below is a short list of water plants divided out by their preferred location in the pond (This list is by no means all inclusive; experiment with different varieties and enjoy!!).

Submerged oxygenating water plants.....elodea/anachris, cabomba, eelgrass, sagittaria

Plants that float freely on the pond surface....water hyacinth, water lettuce, water fern, hornwort, duckweed, fairy moss, frogbit

Bog/marginal plants....most prefer water 2" to 6" deep.....canna, sedges, umbrella plant, some irises such as yellow flag, Japanese, blue flag and Siberian; papyrus, horsetails, chameleon plant, cardinal flower, rush, parrot's feather, pickerel weed, arrowhead, lizard's tail, cattail, marsh marigold, pennywort, sweet flag, taro

Submerged plants.....water lilies (dwarf, miniature, hardy and tropical. The top of the water lily container should be 8 to 12 inches below the surface. Water lilies also like calm water surface.), lotus (known for its height—many get up to 6 feet tall, but there are dwarf varieties available-- and its beautiful foliage and blossom)

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