

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

Water Gardening

Few things in the gardening world are as relaxing and restorative as the sight and sound of water. Whether it be in a modest pot or tub with a small fountain and some bog plants on an apartment balcony, or a grand lake on a European estate, water brings a new dimension to any landscape.

For convenience in this article, the body of water will be referred to as a pond. Exposure to sunlight and placement away from trees from which falling debris shall enter the water are important considerations when placing the pond. Also, the size of the pond itself is crucial. Too many times, I have seen a tiny pool of water shoved into a corner of the yard where it is almost obscured. A pond can be as large as you want it to be. It is no more difficult to maintain a large pond as it is a small one. Moreover, if one desires to have water lilies or fish, it is to be considered that both of these may grow to sizes not suitable for a small pond.

Care & Maintenance

Compared with other types of gardens, water gardens require a minimum of attention. There is very little weeding, certainly no watering, and there are fewer insects and diseases which attack the plants. Clear water is usually the primary goal of any water gardener. In a new pond, water is seldom clear for very long. This can easily be rectified if the pond is of the correct depth, has a good filtration system, and correctly chosen plants and wildlife are stocked in sufficient numbers. Given enough time the water will clear. During the summer, the level of the water should be checked at regular intervals and brought up to its maximum.

The plants should be washed once a week with a strong spray from the garden hose to dislodge any aphids which may have come to the pool.

If algae becomes a nuisance, much of it can be washed down the drain or over the sides of the pool by using the garden hose and a rake. During the summer, one should watch that other plants such as the submerged aquatics do not grow too rampant and take over the bottom of the water feature.

Day-to-day care of water garden plants during the summer is mostly a matter of grooming. If there is an over-production of foliage, trimming is necessary. All discolored or torn leaves or dead blossoms should be cut and removed, stem and all, close to the roots.

Many people are in error when they believe that a pond will necessitate the frequent arduous task of draining and cleaning it. If a pond has a proper balance of plants and sunlight and oxygenation (by fountain or submerged plants), it will almost be completely self-sustaining.

Maintenance of a pond requires the following: pruning back yellowing or dead leaves, spent blooms on water lilies and lotus and fertilizing. A healthy pond will have water as clear as that from a faucet, and will never need to be cleaned.

Plants

When choosing aquatic plants, keep in mind that the plants should cover no more than 50-60 percent of the water surface. There are many types to choose from. Some are free-floating while others are marginal and need to be submerged.

Selection depends on the size of the pond and the kind of look you want.

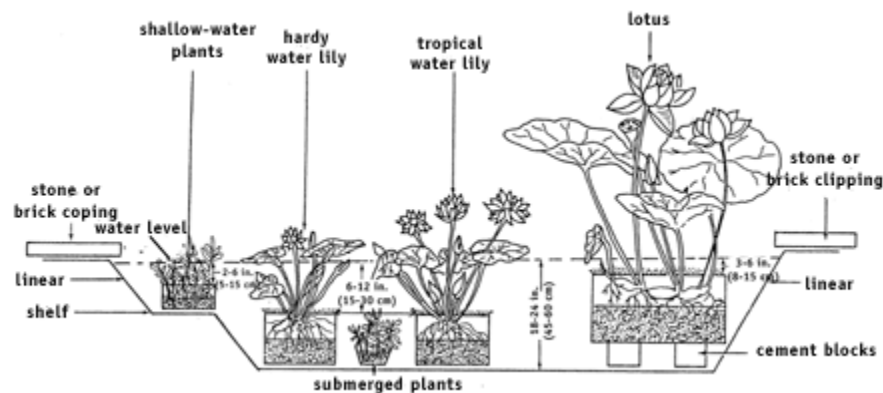
Water lilies can add drama and fragrance even in small tubs. Water lilies are by far the most popular water plants, and the demand for them has spurred the vigorous development of new varieties. Lilies provide a lovely floating carpet of leaves and flowers across the surface of the pond. They also provide fish with shade from the summer sun while depriving algae of the sunlight needed for growth. There are hardy and frost-sensitive varieties.

Some plants provide oxygen and help keep the pond healthy.

Fish can be a beneficial addition because they are good scavengers and clean up debris. They also help control mosquito larvae and other insects.

Water gardening is a fascinating pastime undergoing an enormous renaissance right now. A water feature can be introduced to any size environment and will enhance the area and provide its owner with years of virtually carefree and easy enjoyment.

Water Garden Plants Suitable for Houston Gardens



- **Tropical Water Lilies** Top of the pot 8 inches deep
- **Hardy Water Lilies** Top of the pot 12 inches deep
- **Lotus** Top of the pot 4 to 8 inches deep

Shallow Water Marginal or Bog Plants Top of the pot just below the surface

- Canna
- Cardinal Flower
- Cattail
- Creeping Jenny
- Horsetail Reed
- Juncus
- Lemon Bacopa
- Lizard Tail
- Papyrus
- Pickerel Reed
- Sagittaria
- Iris
- Star Grass
- Water Clover

Submerged Plants (oxygenate the water and trap debris)

- Hornwort

Floating Plants (purify the water)

- Floating Heart