



Water Gardening

When you begin to design a water garden there are many things you must keep in mind. Considerations must be taken as to water depth, amount of sunlight available throughout the day, and how each species of plant you plan to use will relate to its surroundings. Floating leafed and submerged plants are necessary for a healthy pond, and adding plants in differing heights and textures in and around your water garden will give it character and add drama to your existing garden or yard.

Floating Leafed Plants

When using these as your primary plant, plan to have enough to cover 50 to 75 percent of the surface, or one for every 10 square feet (there are dwarf varieties for barrel gardens). If done correctly these plants will cover the surface and limit the sunlight going to the depths holding algae growth in check. Lotus do not contribute to this maintenance tool. Plants which are in this grouping are water lilies and are of two types, tropical and hardy. Tropical lilies have day and night bloomers, whereas all hardy lilies are day bloomers. Some hardy lilies will, however, change color over time.

Submerged Plants

These plants are considered the oxygenators and must be present to have a healthy pond and if it is to support fish. The plants in this category have roots that must be anchored and may be planted in gravel. You should stock them at one bunch per 2 square feet of surface area, in groups of 6 to 12 depending on the size of the pot. Caging these pots is often advisable if the pond is to contain fish, which tend to forage on submerged foliage.

Free floating Plants

These plants include duck weed, water lettuce and water hyacinth. Like the name would suggest they float on the surface giving your water garden a natural beauty as they move with the wind or current. These plants add oxygen to the pond and shade for any fish you might have. To be aware that although readily available through catalogs many of these plants may be illegal for various reasons.

Bog or Marginal Plants

Bog plants offer help to gardeners where sunlight is not in abundance. They can tolerate as little as three hours of direct sunlight. Moist or soggy soils are best but some can actually grow in standing water. Even bog plants can make your water garden unique and appealing. They are available in a variety of shapes, heights, textures and colors. Included in this group are lotus, sagittaria, dwarf bamboo, iris spp., cattails and sweet flag.

The best time to complete your water garden is in the Spring. Do not purchase plants until you are ready for them to go into your garden. When ordering plants from a mail order catalog be sure to plan accordingly so that when they arrive you will be ready to plant them. It is imperative that the plants purchased be in top condition and that you install them immediately, if possible, for the best results.