

Harper's Says...

Water Gardening Basics

Water gardening is a breeze. Once established, it takes care of itself for months on end. Water Gardening is inexpensive and uncomplicated, even a half oak barrel can become a mini oasis.

Choose a location which receives at least six hours of sunlight each day, a location away from messy trees and their leaves.

Choose from a variety of ponds, oak barrels, flexible liners, or pre-formed plastic ponds, which are all readily available and inexpensive. Even old bathtubs are easily used. Installation of below ground ponds is easy. Just dig your hole, level, line with sand and place pond in the ground.

Don't be surprised if your water turns pea-green when the pond is young - it's normal and will eventually disappear, leaving a clean, clear water garden behind. Avoid using chemical algaecides.

Shoot for 50-60% of the water surface being covered with plants, lilies, iris, hyacinths and many others which are readily available at Harper's Nursery (Phoenix location only).

Put fish in your pond after two or three weeks. Fish supply nutrients for the plants and fun for you. Local aquarium shops have all sorts of exotic gold fish which are perfect for valley water gardens. **CAUTION:** Koi (Japanese carp) are notorious for eating plants and digging up plants. It is best to avoid these for most gardens.

Ponds dug in the ground need not be over 24" deep. 18" will do fine. **Use caution when children are around water, even small water containers can be dangerous.**

Be sure to include 'oxygenating' plants in your pond. These beauties grow underwater and absorb the carbon dioxide given off by fish and convert it to oxygen. Remember, the proper blend of fish and plants results in a balanced pond.

Enjoy!!

Planting Instructions

Water plants are very sturdy, hardy plants, but care must be taken when they are out of the water. Keep them covered with wet newspaper or cloth and in the shade while the containers are made ready for planting.

Caution

- Do not use any containers made of redwood, as it discolors the pool and may damage plants.
- Use only garden soil; no peat moss, mulch, perlite, or potting mix. Be sure the soil contains no pesticides.
- It is best not to use manure as it greatly encourages the growth of algae and can burn the plants.

Tropical Lilies

Planting tubs should be at least 15 1/2" in diameter and 8" deep. Fill half full with garden soil and add 2 cups Lily fertilizer and mix well. Continue filling with soil to within 3" of the top of the container. Make a depression in the soil in the center of the container to accommodate the roots and soil ball. Cover the root with soil leaving the crown of the plant exposed. Firmly press soil around plant and cover soil with 1" or more of sand or pea gravel. Gently lower plant into water to avoid disturbing soil and block plant up so leaves just float on the surface.

Hardy Lilies

Fill container and add fertilizer same as for the tropical lily, but make the depression at the side of the container. Plant the tuber with the crown (where leaves and buds emerge), out of the soil and pointing toward the center of the container. Cover with soil and firm soil as above; top off with sand or gravel. Gently lower container into pond.

Lotus

Fill a large tub or other round container nearly full of soil, add fertilizer, mix and continue filling. Make a depression in the soil. Place the tuber in the depression taking great care not to touch the brittle growing point. Cover tuber with 2" of soil at the heavy end and allow the growing point to extend 1/2" above the soil line. Place a flat rock over the covered part of the tuber and cover the soil with a thin layer of sand. Lower the container until it is covered with 2" of water. As the plant grows, increase the water depth until it is 6 - 12". For planting lotus above ground, fill tub 1/2 full of soil, plant and then fill and maintain 4 - 5" of water over the soil.

Bog-plants

Plant in container 8" in diameter or larger and filled with garden soil. Firm soil and cover with a layer of sand or gravel. Place in pool until soil line is 3 - 6" below water surface.

Small Flowering Aquatics

Plant in same size container as lilies in garden soil, 3 - 4 plants per container. Cover with sand or gravel. Place in pond in 4 - 8" of water.

Oxygenators

Plant in 1 gallon containers, 2 bunches per container, in garden soil. Cover with sand or gravel and place on bottom of pond.

Water Gardening Questions

Can water plants tolerate our hot, sunny Arizona weather?

Not only can water plants tolerate our bright sun and warm weather, they thrive on it. Water lilies need a minimum of 4-6 hours of sunlight to flower well. Warm water is a necessity for growing tropical water lilies. So, our climate is perfect!!

Can a pond have too much sun?

During the really hot summer months, some afternoon shade is desirable. Some flowers suffer somewhat from a full day of sun, and afternoon shade also helps keep the water cooler.

Do I need a large area to have a garden pond?

No! Some of the loveliest ponds are not swimming pool size. Excluding tub gardens, the pond can be anything from 5 X 5 on up. It is true that larger bodies of water require less maintenance, but with careful planting, the smaller pond can be a real asset to the garden. It should be approximately 24" deep.

What materials are available for an in-ground pond?

Concrete is the traditional choice for ponds. However, it is expensive and requires reinforcement. Many people feel they need professional help to build a concrete pond.

Fiberglass pre-formed ponds are easy to install, but the cost is prohibitive and they are usually too shallow.

Vinyl liners are now widely available, considered a good buy, and are easy to install.

What about apartment dwellers - can I have a water garden?

Yes. Tub gardens are perfect for you. Choose a spot that receives 4 - 5 hours of early sunlight and afternoon shade. One of the small or mini water lilies will give your small pool a balanced look. Tubs can also be sunken in the ground.

Do I need to put fish in my pond?

Yes. Fish complete nature's ecological balance in the pond. A few small goldfish will keep up with the mosquito population and provide a nice touch of color. For tub gardens, mosquito fish will do the job nicely.

Is the shallow saucer shaped pool the best design?

No. This type of pond causes more problems than any other. The too shallow (less than 18") pool gets too hot and limits the types of plants that can be used. The saucer shape heats unevenly causing excessive algae growth. The sloping sides allows the planting containers to slide to the middle of the pond.