

# GARDEN SPOT

## NURSERY

## Fun and Easy Water Gardens

Water plants can be an amazing addition to your landscape. The calming sound of flowing water can bring us a lot of serenity through the stresses of life. Learn how to build a water garden of any size for your back yard or deck. All you need is a water basin, a few aquatic plants and a simple and affordable fountain pump to enjoy the benefits of a backyard pond without any digging! After you're done, water plants will basically take care of themselves, with minimal maintenance from you. Can you think of a more ideal way to garden?

### Selecting the Perfect Pond Pot

You'll need a pot that holds water. That's it. You can use ceramic, plastic, sealed cement, porcelain, metal. Repurpose old wash tubs, even clawfoot tubs. Avoid using wood containers, such as wine and whiskey barrels, as they may contain bacteria that are harmful to plants and fish. The size is up to you. Choose a pot that corresponds with the size of your space and the number of plants you want to invite into your "pond." Four to five plants fill a pot that is about 16-inches in diameter, for reference.

### Types of Water Plants

- Floaters such as water hyacinth and water lettuce help reduce algae in the water garden. Water hyacinths, while beautiful, are invasive. This means it will reproduce quickly, great for your water garden. But don't discard excess into open water.
- Oxygenators help maintain the proper pH balance of the water. They will either settle on the bottom of your pot or float on the surface. Oxygenators, as the name suggests, produce oxygen during most of the day. They also derive most of their nutrients from the water. This means they can help battle algae.
- Bog Plants grow naturally in shallow water at a pond's perimeter. In your container, you can simulate this by placing them on top of rocks or small inverted pots.
- Marginals grow 1 to 12 inches underwater in the margins of ponds, between the shore and deeper water. These are great for small pond pots and usually sit at the bottom of the pot.
- Deep Water Plants such as water lilies need at least one foot of water above their roots and a few square feet to spread their foliage. This will require a larger container such as a bathtub or a whiskey barrel. Water lilies help cool the water and reduce algae growth.

## Building Your Water Garden

Optimal locations for water gardens get morning sun or protected, partial sun. Intense heat such as afternoon sun can burn and harm the plants. The most visually appealing pots include a variety of horizontal and vertical growing plants. Leave some empty space so as not to crowd your plants and create a more serene visual look. Adding a fountain can really improve the quality of your water garden. There are many different varieties to choose from. The higher the spout, the louder the water flow, creating a zen experience for your yard.

## Maintenance

The bare minimum necessary to maintain your water garden is to keep it filled with water. You will likely need to bring your pot indoors for overwintering. Use fertilizer sparingly, especially if you intend to introduce fish to your water garden. To battle algae, keep some floaters on the surface to cut down on light, and include some submerged oxygenators, which compete with algae. Every once in a while, it can be beneficial to drain the pot and scrub the surfaces. If your plants need divided, remember to pot them in clay garden soil or purchase water-plant soil. If you're concerned about mosquitoes, you can purchase "Mosquito Dunks" *Bacillus thuringiensis*, which help keep them at bay.