

The Water Garden

In the water garden, the focus is on the pond plants and ecosystem. As on land, always plan your garden before you build it. Begin with the basics:

- Include a deep-water area (24-30") for two reasons: it allows the pond to over-winter plants, fish and scavengers below the ice in the winter, and it keeps the pond cooler in the summer. Hardy water lilies live at this depth year-round.
- Include a marginal shelf (12-15" deep and a minimum of 12-24" wide) for plants which require a shallower depth is also a good safety idea – if critters dive into the pond, it provides an easy way out.
- Include a lotus shelf 14" deep and a least 2" wide in the sunshine pond. The Lotus likes shallow warm water in the summer and deeper water in the winter.
- Make your sunshine water garden as big as you can imagine! Remember that the big bloomers on land and in the water alike love the hot Midwest sun!
- In a shadier location, plan for a smaller pond – The architecture of the pond becomes more prominent, with more open water and less bloom. Include a waterfall or stream, and place lots of great hostas and ferns around the pond.

There are many aquatic and wetland plants for the water gardener. Water plants are vigorous growers, and need little or no help from us other than trimming, dividing and fertilizing. You can be confident you will experience rapid growth and lots of bloom, even the first year! Start with tried and true plants hardy to our area.

As with land plants so it is with water plants. You should place the taller plants toward the back of the pond, using larger, broader pots to provide mass plantings and compliment the stonework. Leave "negative space" in front of the waterfall, where the water dances off of the stones and into the pond.

Fish love to frolic where the water is most disturbed. Place water lilies and other floating-leaf plants in the quieter water, with the taller plants behind, flanking the waterfall. Low growing plants will hide the pots of larger plants and soften the edges of the pond and stream, where the water meets the stone margin. You should plant low

growing terrestrial plants on the outside of the stone border so that the stone will be seen.

If you wish to invite wildlife to your pond, create a stone peninsula out into the pond or make a small section of peddle beach, small critters can walk up to the water to bathe or take a drink.

In the water garden, the key to good water quality is an eco-system! One part of the eco-system that is very important is plants. They use up excess nutrients, hide fish and tadpoles from prey, and shade the pond to keep it cool and prevent algae photosynthesis.

You should plan to spend 1 to 2 hours per week "playing in the water", cleaning filters and dead-heading plants. The amount of time depends on the size and stocking levels (both plants and fish) and season. The time you spend will depend on the size of your pond and amount of fish and plants you have.