

## Water Plants

A pond or containerised water-garden is not complete without the use of water-plants. Water-plants give the pond its natural and colourful appearance. Plants however, also play another very important role by maintaining the balance in the pond's own ecosystem. As well as removing nitrates, water-plants create shade and provide oxygen. When planning your outdoor pond it is advisable to use a variety of the following water-plant types.

### OXYGENATORS

The main function of these water-plants is to create oxygen in the water. They also help to maintain water clarity and are beneficial to fish. Vallisneria is an excellent oxygenator, which grows all year-round and prefers full sun. They can be completely submerged and have very attractive foliage. Ceratophyllum (foxtail) is also a very good oxygenator and algae-controller and tolerates lower light intensities.

### DEEP WATER AQUATICS

The most well known deep-water aquatic, and probably the most beautiful of all water-plants, is the Waterlily. Lilies are available in different varieties and colours, and also vary in their hardiness. The large lily pads help to shade the pond.

#### There are two main types of Lilies:

- 1) **Hardy Waterlilies:** These are the most common waterlilies and are very easy to grow. Each leaf may grow to 35cm in diameter and each plant can grow up to 1 metre square. They are available in a range of flower colours, including red, yellow, pink, white and apricot. Flowering is in the warmer months from September to April.
- 2) **Tropical Waterlilies:** These have larger leaves than hardy lilies and similarly come in a range of colours including pink, yellow, white, red and blue. Flowering is slightly later than the Hardy Lily varieties.

Waterlilies grow best in still water without water splash on the leaves. Being perennials they die down in the winter and regenerate in spring. Aponogeton (water hawthorn), an Australian native, flowers during the reverse season to waterlilies and is therefore a good plant to have combined with the lilies.

Lilies need a water depth of about 40-50 cm and about 5 hours of direct sunlight each day to maximise flowering.

Waterlilies should be repotted every two years to prevent them becoming root-bound. The plants need to be removed from their pots and the rhizome cut back to around 50-60mm, depending upon their initial size. New waterlily potting mix is then added to a special water-plant basket. Ensure that fertiliser does not leach into the pond by surrounding it with soil. Gravel or pebbles are placed over the top of the basket to minimise leaching of soil.

Other common deep-water auctics include;

Hydrocleys (waterpoppy), an excellent smaller flowering plant with shortlived yellow flower. Nymphiodes (water fringe) a perennial with a fringed yellow star shaped flower. Marsilea (nardoo), a very good ornamental native perennial with clover-like fronds.

### MARGINALS

Many plant varieties belong to this broad category of water-plants. Most marginals are suitable for water depths of up to 20cm. When used around the inside edge of the pond, they help break up the formal appearance of the pond, causing it to blend in naturally. Essentially, marginal plants are used for aesthetic purposes by providing colour and foliage contrast.

Common marginals include; Thypha (bullrush) Cyperus alternifolius (umbrella grass) Cyperus sp. (papyrus) and many sedges and rushes.

### FLOATING PLANTS

The plants in this category are similar in function to the oxygenators, however, they don't need planting and simply "float" on the water surface, and help to control blanket weed and green water, whilst removing algae producing nitrates. Other common floating plants include Azolla, Lemna (duckweed) and Nymphiodes (snowflake).

### PLANTING YOUR POND

Your Waldecks staff will help you select an appropriate mix of plants to suit your pond. Plants should be introduced during their growing season, i.e. spring - summer, when the weather is warmer.

To avoid creating mud in the pond, use water-plant planting baskets for easier handling and removal. Soil will then be contained and the plants easily positioned. Once the plants have established themselves, the baskets will not be noticeable.

Shortly after planting a new pool you will notice the start of the pond getting itself into balance. The first stage is when the water turns pea green in colour. This will take time to clear, so be patient. Do not change the water as you will be simply adding more mineral salts and will start again the slow process. The next stage is the appearance of a reddish tinge around the edge of the pool. Depending upon pond chemistry, plant density and the time of the year the clearing could take between one and ten weeks. The clearing will however eventually happen and will stay that way unless the balance is again upset.

If you are impatient and can't wait for the pool to clear, use Clear Pond or similar as recommended by your Waldecks staff. Clear Pond will clump together fine particles and sinks them out of suspension.

Clear-pond will not remove filament type algae. This should be removed manually or with the use of an algaecide such as Green Away (check manufacturer's specifications if plants or fish in the pond). The installation of an external or in-pool biological filter is always beneficial (and essential in some cases).

To ensure plants receive optimum nutrition for healthy plant growth use Flora Boost or ask your Waldecks staff for a suitable alternative.

Remember that algae thrive on minerals and light and by establishing a biological balance with the use of plenty of plants is the best way of attaining an algae free pond. Plants deprive algae of both minerals and light are the best way of controlling algae and, of course, to the best way to create that natural and beautiful looking pond.