

Water Gardening in Containers
- Great Things in Small Packages!
..... ***Andy Lohaza***

One of the latest horticultural trends is water gardening. Some people tend to get overwhelmed with the information available regarding ponds and large water features. A container is the ideal starting point when thinking about a water garden. After all, if the container can hold water, it also holds possibilities!

The element of water adds a striking contrast to the traditional concept of planters and containers. Choosing the right container is essential in creating the ideal effect. A small grouping of various sized containers, each holding one or two specimen plants can make a stronger statement than one large container packed with plants. It is important to understand some basic criteria before choosing a container for your water feature.

1. Most important it must be able to hold water! Even your favourite container can be retrofitted to hold water. Liners, plastic pails and other methods are ideal solutions for leaky containers.

2. It should be suited to the plant's cultural requirements: a water lily will need a deeper container with a wider opening to allow the floating leaves to spread out. Whereas a flowering rush can tolerate a shallow bowl with a narrow opening and little water above the crown of the plant. Inspect the labels of the plant material, the requirements will be found there.

Locating the water garden container is also important. Many flowering water plants will require at least 6-8 hours of direct sun daily. Typically the containers are located on/along a patio or deck, make sure the structure you are putting the container on will be able to hold the added weight, especially if you are considering a grouping of containers.

What about the Plant Choices?

The selections are great! Depending on the effect you are striving for, you can have a very formal look with striking foliage plants or fanciful atmosphere with bright flowers and interesting plants.

For small containers a good start are Sweet Flag (*Acorus*), Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha*) and Spiral Rush (*Juncus*). These are all ideally suited in shallow containers with little water above the crown of the plants. Floating Heart (*Nymphoides peltata*) is an ideal substitute for a water lily like plant in a smaller container.

The medium and larger container offer added benefit of combination plantings. A tall upright form can be placed next to a floating leaved plant and smaller trailing plant form. An example of such a combination could include a striking foliage plant with an upright form like *Thalia* (*Thalia dealbata*) with a water lily such as *Nymphaea* 'Aurora' (yellow), *N.* 'Laydekeri Lilacae' (pink) or *N.* 'James Brydon' (red). A complementary trailing plant would be Aquatic Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). A striking tropical cascading plant is Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum*).

The options are endless in the design of a container water garden. Utilize marginal and bog plants in their own containers to complement your water feature. Astilbe, Chameleon Plant (Houttuynia), Ferns and Hostas are wonderful additions! Remember that the containers will require daily topping up of water in hot summer days and because they are above ground, cooler temperatures will affect the plants sooner than terrestrial plantings. Put them to bed for the season as soon as the weather starts to turn. But, until then, enjoy the water garden containers you created and think about where that pond will eventually be located!

Upright Forms	Floating Form
Iris	Water Lilies
Lobelia	Mosquito Fern (Azolla)
Arrowhead (Sagittaria)	Water Lettuce (Pistia stratiotes)
Bullrushes (Typha).	Pond Lily (Nuphar)







Peace Lily

Duckweed

Hakiro Nishiki
Dwarf Sweetflag

Fiber Optic
Plant

Salvinia

Pennywort