

**Dwarf Papyrus**, *Cyperus haspan*, round brush-like balls on stalks. Tropical

**Water Canna**, numerous varieties, red, orange, pink flowers, large leaves. Tropical

**White Rush**, *Scirpus albescens*, needle-like foliage, white with light green stripes. Hardy

#### (1-2 feet high)

**Miniature cattail**, *Typha minima*, small sword like foliage, brown catkins. Hardy

**Star Grass**, *Dichromena colorata*, star-shaped white flowers atop needle like stems from grass-like foliage. Tropical

**Taro**, *Colocasia esculenta*, many varieties, leaves are shaped like an elephant ear. Tropical

**Sagittaria**, green narrow foliage, with clusters of white flowers on spikes. Hardy

#### Blooming or Colorful Plants

**Houttuynia Cordata Variegata**, multi-colored leaves of white, green, red. Hardy Tolerates less light.

**Water Celery, Variegated**, *Oenanthe javanica* 'Flamingo', pinkish, white and green leaves, simulates the top of celery. Hardy

**Aquatic mint**, *Mentha aquatica*, ruffled green leaves with top spike of purple flowers. Hardy

#### Cascading plants

**Parrots Feather**, *Myriophyllum aquaticum*, feathery whorled leaves, grows across a pond, will cascade in a pot. Hardy

**Sensitive Plant, Pea Plant**, *Aeschynomene fluitans*, yellow sweet-pea like flowers on symmetrically oval leaved stems. Tropical

#### Miniature Lilies

##### Hardy

N. 'Perry's Baby Red', red cup shape flowers, small leaves

N. 'Helvola', bright yellow flowers, mottled foliage  
N 'Tetragona', cup shaped white blooms, green leaves with purple blotches

N. 'Laydekeri Rosea', small pink flowers

**Small Varieties**-adaptable to container growing  
**Hardy**

N. 'Chrysantha', creamy yellow cup-like flower darkening with age.

N. 'Laydekeri Fulgens', red flowers, brown flecked dark green leaves

N.' Ellisiana', red star shaped flower, green leaves

N. 'Lucida', red to pinkish-white flower, green and purple blotched leaves. Tolerates less light.

#### Tropical

N. 'Dauben', small pale blue flowers, speckled green foliage. Tolerates less light.

N. 'Tina', deep violet-purple blooms, light green leaves  
N. 'Margaret Mary', blue cup, starlike flowers, lightly mottled leaves

N. 'Panama Pacific', starlike violet-purple flowers. Tolerates less light.

N. 'Josephine', white cup shaped flowers, solid green leaves.

#### Surface-Floating Plants

**Fairy moss**, *Azolla caroliniana*, moss-like green carpet. Tropical

**Water Hyacinth**, *Eichhornia crassipes*, fleshy leaved plant, purpleflower. Tropical

**Water lettuce**, *Postia stratiotes*, rosette shaped foliage. Tropical

**Duckweed**, *Lemna spp.*, light green tiny oval leaves.



### Colorado Water Garden Society

For more information about water gardening

contact the

Colorado Water Garden Society:

Cyndie Thomas

303.755.1885

Visit our Web Page at

<http://www.colowatergardensociety.org>

Copyright©1999-2003

Colorado Water Garden Society

# Container Water Gardens





If you would like to try water gardening and don't want to do something as permanent as a large pond, or don't have space for a pond, container water gardening is a pleasing alternative.

Many water gardeners use container water gardens to utilize excess plants they have divided, or to satisfy the desire for more water features. One water feature never seems to be enough.

### Choosing a Container

You will need a container which will hold water. The container could be a ceramic planter without bottom holes for drainage, a large watering can, a crock pot, an old footed bath tub, or a half-barrel (which you will need to line), the possibilities are unlimited. There are a number of tubs designed specifically for water gardens available at garden centers.

Half-barrels are available at a minimal cost, but will require lining with two layers of black plastic, or a preformed liner made specifically for them. The lining safeguards against loss of water and toxic substances which could affect plants or fish.

### Container Placement

After choosing your container you will then need to determine where to place your container water garden where it will have adequate sun. Six hours of sun is recommended. Containers can be sunk in the ground or stand on the ground. Containers set on the ground, on a deck or patio can be subjected to temperature changes from 50 degrees at night to 90 degrees during the day. This rapid temperature change can affect plant growth. By placing a small 200-watt submersible aquarium heater in the container, this will help stabilize low temperatures. Setting the temperature at 72 degrees will allow the heater to turn on only if the water temperature drops below this level.

Smaller pots may be more easily affected by temperatures. Keep in mind a darker container will be more apt to absorb heat from the sun than a light colored pot. Different materials, such as

metal, are more affected by surrounding air temperatures than a heavy ceramic pot. Smaller pots will benefit from being placed where they receive sun in the morning and are shaded in the hottest part of the afternoon.

### Setting up and Planting

After determining where your container would be best placed you will want to add 1-2 inches of pea gravel to the bottom, then add water to about one-third down from the top of the container. The pea gravel aids in the creation of natural biological filtration, through increasing surface area for good bacteria growth.

Now you will need to select plants to put in your container garden. If your container is large enough (15 inches in diameter or greater) then you could include a miniature water lily, several marginal plant varieties and some surface plant varieties. Lilies and marginal plants will need to be potted to put in your container. A rich garden soil should be used to pot water plants. Potting soil, compost, vermiculite, or perlite should not be used, as they float out and foul the water.

Marginal plants should be planted in a one quart size pot or minimum of a four inch pot for best results. If the pot has drainage holes, cover these holes with a piece of newspaper. Fill part way with rich heavy garden soil, add a fertilizer tablet for aquatic plants, then place plant in the center and spread the roots. Top with additional soil, pack firmly.

Hardy and tropical lilies (*Nymphaea*) will need larger containers. The miniature hardy lily will need a container that is a minimum of 8 inches in diameter and a standard size hardy water lily will need a minimum of a 12 inch diameter pot for planting. Hanging basket pots are sized well for planting hardy lilies, as they are wider than they are deep.

Tropical water lilies need a one gallon pot as a minimum for planting. Fill the pot half full with a rich heavy garden soil and add 2-4 fertilizer tablets. Continue to fill the pot with soil to about 2" from the top. The tuber should be set upright, in the center of the pot with the roots buried gently in the soil. Make

sure the tip of the crown is at soil level. Firmly pack soil in the pot.

Hardy lilies are planted in much the same way as tropicals. Hardies grow horizontally across the container, so a wider pot, rather than deeper pot is necessary for planting. The rhizome should be planted at one edge of the container with the rhizome planted at an angle of about 45 degrees with the crown exposed pointing into the center. Remember to use a heavy rich garden soil, firmly packed in the pot. The plant can be lowered to a depth of 6" to begin with, and then lowered to a depth of 12"-18" as the plant grows, if container depth will allow. To adjust positioning of pots in your container, you can use bricks, or pots turned upside-down to set potted plants on.

You will want to add some surface, or floating plants. These just sit on the surface of the water and help absorb nutrients. If you have a large container, you may wish to add oxygenating plants, which can be anchored in the bottom gravel.

After setting up your container garden, you may wish to add a few fish, to control mosquito populations. The best choices are *Gambusia*, *White Cloud* or inexpensive feeder goldfish. Remember to use a dechlorinator and chloramine remover at the rate specified if you are using city treated water.

Water will need to be added to your container garden to replace water lost through evaporation and transpiration by the plants.

## Plants for Container Water Gardens

### Strong vertical accent plants

( 3-5 feet high)

**Giant Variegated Reed**, *Arundo donax variegata*, cane-like with green and white leaves. Hardy **Umbrella Palm**, *Cyperus alternifolius*, clump with upright shoots, green leaves at top resembling an umbrella. Tropical