

## Varieties of Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

There are nearly 100 varieties of *Nelumbo* in existence today. Below are the common ones that are readily available.

Miniature varieties for small ponds or large containers (these varieties rise an average 1.5'-2.5' in height above soil) include:

*N. nucifera* 'Momo Botan', with double flowers, deep rose petals and yellow centers.

*N. nucifera* 'Shirokunshi' with pure white, tulip-shaped flowers.

Medium varieties would be from 2.5'-5' in height.

*N. nucifer* 'Empress' has a striking white, single flower with deep-pink edges.

*N. nucifera* 'Roseum Plenum' has very large, double, pink-rose flowers.

Large Lotus can reach heights greater than 5'. Varieties in this category include:

*N. nucifera* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' has large flowers which change from deep pink to creamy yellow.

*N. nucifera* 'Lutea' is the only native North American lotus. It has single large, yellow flowers.

*N. nucifera* 'Perry's Giant Sunburst' has very large, yellow flowers.

For more information about water lilies and other aquatic plants contact the Colorado Water Garden Society:  
Nancy Jewett, Membership  
(303) 671-7964

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# LOTUS

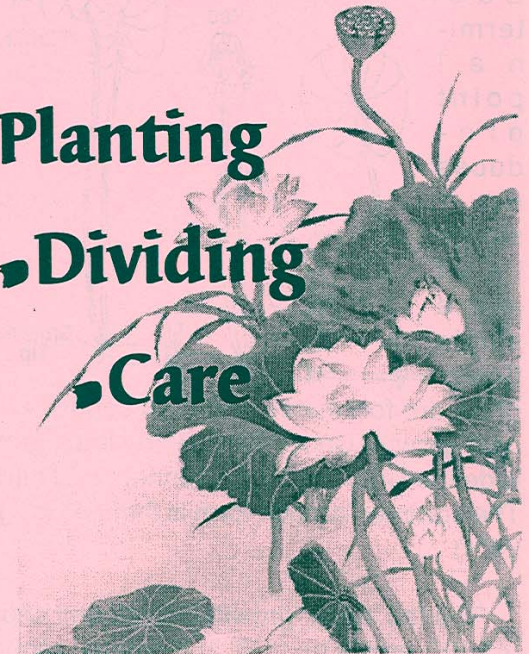
*Nelumbo nucifera*

By Stan Skinger

► Planting

► Dividing

► Care





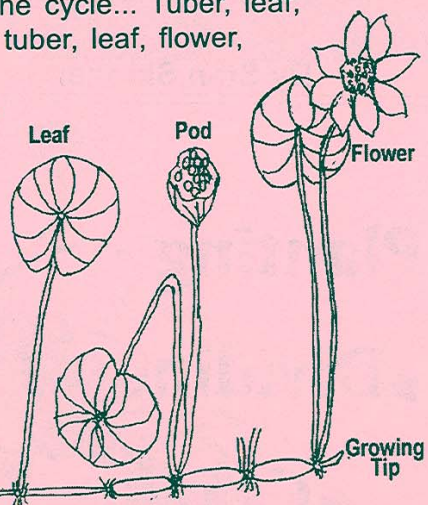
Lotus are sun-loving plants and will not do well with less than 6 hours of direct sun. Lotus are winter hardy in Colorado if they are not allowed to freeze solid, and may be overwintered in the same manner as your hardy lilies.

Lotus flowers range in size from the 2"-3" miniatures, to plants with blooms over a foot in diameter, and all form seed pods sought after in flower arrangements.

Lotus are quite hardy, aggressive, can be invasive in pond culture, and may take over the pond if not contained. It is important to grow them in containers without holes.

Lotus grow in a linear fashion, with a sequence of a tuber producing a leaf, perhaps a flower, then beginning another tuber to repeat the cycle... Tuber, leaf, flower, tuber, leaf, flower, etc.

Each terminal point produces a single leaf and a single flower



(if we are fortunate), and then sends out the next growth. Under the soil, the lotus growth is defined into two forms, runners and tubers. The summer 'runner' form is thin and long (to 24"+).

The fall 'tuber' growth is thick and shorter (4"-10") and is up to 2" in diameter, tapering

at the ends. With lotus plants, the most recent growth, called the 'tip', is notoriously brittle and sensitive to breakage, and it is crucial to the plant. Should it be broken or bruised, the lotus cannot grow and will die.

Due to the fragility of lotus tips, and the necessary 'banana' tuber form, lotus are best divided and/or shipped in the early spring. In Zone 5, this time is between the middle of March and the end of April when the tubers are still dormant, as they become quickly unmanageable once they start growing.

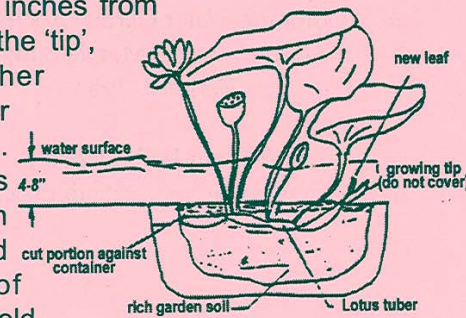
The tubers should arrive, or be harvested, with one or two complete tubers and the remainder of another. The entire tuber supporting the growing tip must not be harmed, but any preceding tubers may be trimmed away, if necessary, to allow the remainder to fit into the pot. To do so, trim the tuber about 1" away from the terminal of the retained growth.

## Planting

To plant the lotus, the tuber should be placed with the cut portion against the container, and with the growing end pointing towards the center. Choose a container large enough to allow from four to six inches from the end of the 'tip', to the other side, for growth.

The tuber is then covered with 1" of soil, and held in place by placing a brick or rock over the tuber. The growing tip should protrude from the soil.

Round containers are preferred as lotus conform to any shape as they grow. Containers



of 16" to 24" diameter, or larger, are ideal. A square or rectangular container is OK, but lotus may grow into the corner, deforming the tuber. The miniatures will do well in containers of 8"-12" and, in general, the larger the container, the better the lotus will do. For optimal growth, the water depth, over the soil, should be 4"-8".

The soil for lotus should be as rich as possible, with some clay, and heavy enough so it does not loosen or float.

## Fertilization

Lotus should be fed every 3 weeks with 2 or 3 fertilizer tablets, placed about 4" from the newest 2 or 3 leaves. A single tablet near the older leaves, will assist in proper tuber production.

A single tuber with growing tip, will produce flowers the first summer under normal conditions.

## Dividing Lotus

Lotus will need to be divided about every two years. Lotus grow their tubers in a mass and tangle very well. When it is time to divide the lotus, the soil must be gently removed

from the tubers, and the tubers separated in a manner to provide a 'banana' tuber for each growing tip. A stream of water from a hose helps in the process. Again, be careful to not damage the tip. The thin 'summer' tubers should be discarded and only the 'banana' type tubers retained. Retain as much growth on the division as will fit into the pot.

