

WATER LILIES

BY ROGER D. BURROUGHS

T.C.A.S.

You may never have noticed, but no matter what the beauty of a garden may be, in harmony of planting, in the beauty of landscaping, the visitor drifts to the water lily pool and there finds a sanctuary, a place where one can forget the trials of the day and enjoy the charm and solace that only exquisite beauty can provide.

California water lilies have the advantage of our long warm summers and put on a marvelous growth during this period. Strong plants will burst into bloom soon after being planted in the pool.

The delicate shadings and tones of color within any one blossom alone are almost breathtaking. It is even more thrilling to find that there are so many totally distinct colors and varieties which can be purchased for a modest price. Beauty sufficient to put the orchid to shame is found in all the primary colors of red, blue, yellow, white and perhaps, black (in shadow light). The Master Painter's brush strokes and blends even these into lavender, violet, salmon, a translucent green, pink and purple. And yet one further venture into the beauty of color and blend, there are varieties which appear as though the petals of one blossom were skillfully plucked from one and transferred to another, which results in a whole new series of blossoms having contrasting petals and center color.

Water lilies should be planted in soil, approximately one-half to one bushel of soil for each lily of medium size, (2 feet). Use only top soil and never any planting mixes, such as peat moss, compost and so forth. For best results mix fertilizer in the bottom two inches of soil of the planting container. The top two inches of the container should be filled with coarse sand or fine gravel to avoid having the planting medium stirred out into the pool either by fishes or the water currents. Water lilies should be placed in water which is sixteen to twenty-four inches deep to provide the ideal depth of water over the crown of the plant, i.e. ten or less inches.

The planting container may be either of baked clay or plastic. Do not use redwood containers since that will cause the water to become discolored and unsightly. And if finding a container proves to be a problem, then forget it and simply prepare a mound directly on the bottom of the pool. Make the mound in the shape of a cone, just like for the backyard out of the water. Start with the fertilizer and soil, add soil to the desired height, then finish off the mound with sand or pebbles. Finally insert the roots and most of the crown at a forty-five degree angle into the peak of the mound. Care and caution are the by-words for it may be as tricky as adding gallons of water to your indoor aquarium without scattering your aquascaping to keep the mound formed and not disperse all over the pool. Curious fishes and spurious water currents can prove frustrating to this construction. Once the planting is done, the more gentle currents and curious fishes the better to shimmer the jewel-like beauty upon the surface.

Those who do not have a back yard, and for those others who are using all their grassed area for the raising of dogs, cats and kids, will find their delight in a water garden of equal beauty and lesser scale through the use of wooden tubs, old galvanized tubs, old washing machines, and old bath tubs. Lilies will grow with only four inches of water over their crowns, and there are so many water plants that will do well in a small space, that there is no end to the possibilities of this type of water garden. There is always enough room for fish. After all, they control the mosquito larvae and the algae.