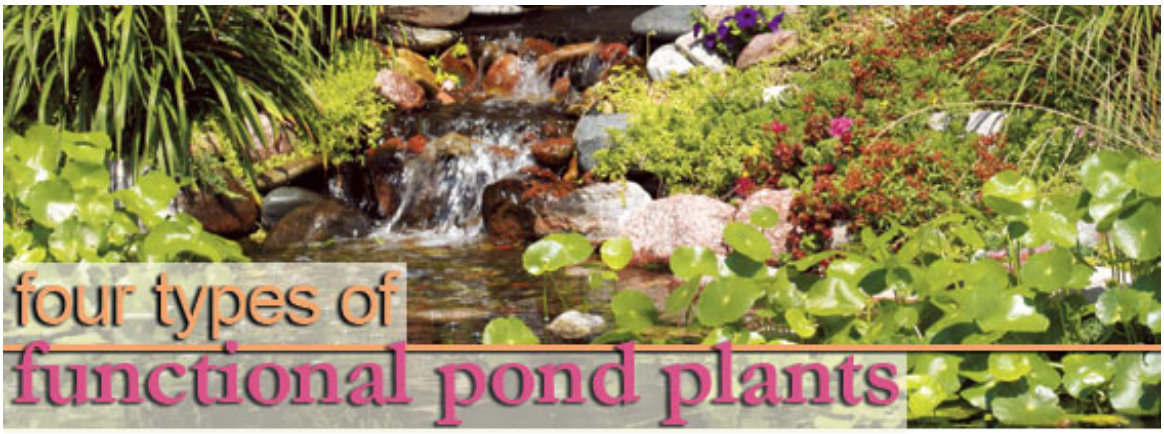
Pond Plants: How to Get the Best Results!

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Not only do plants add beauty to any setting, they are essential in helping create and maintain a healthy contained ecosystem in your backyard. Pond plants are extremely beneficial, as they:

- limit algae growth by blocking excess sunlight and consuming algae-fueling nutrients
- filter water naturally by trapping sediment, reducing nutrients, and breaking down toxic compounds and pathogens
- provide surface area for colonies of nitrifying bacteria (the same in your biofilter)
- offer shelter for pond inhabitants
- help your pond maintain oxygen through photosynthesis as well as by keeping water temperatures down (and oxygen in) through shade

Take a lesson from nature

If you're deciding whether or not plants are right for your backyard pond, consider this: in natural wetlands, plants comprise up to 90% of all life, keeping water conditions in healthy balance for the other 10% by consuming the organic nutrients (waste) from fish, mammals, birds, etc.

Choosing the right variety of plants

Pond plants are categorized as submerged plants, marginal or bog plants, floating plants, and deep water emergent plants. Before selecting pond plants, research your desired varieties to determine their needs, growth habits, and ultimate size:

submerged plants

Submerged plants, such as Anacharis and Cabomba, grow completely underwater. They provide a great place for your fish to hide from predators. They also pull carbon dioxide from the water and then release beneficial oxygen after photosynthesis. These oxygenating plants do not require fertilizing; they use the excess nutrients already present in your pond water.

marginal or bog plants

These colorful, lush plants, which include Cattails and Irises, grow in the shallow water or saturated soil around the rim or margins of a pond. Bog plants tend to be heavy root feeders that search for nutrients primarily from soil or potting media. While they rely minimally on pond water for nutrients, bog plants improve water quality by extracting excess detrimental nutrients from the pond environment before they can accumulate.

deep water emergent plants

Some of the most well-known and recognizable pond plants come from this group, which includes Water Lilies and Lotus. Deep water emergent plant roots grow deep underwater in planters on the pond bottom. Leaves and flowers emerge and spread upon the surface, providing fish and other inhabitants with shade and cover from predators.

floating plants

Floating plants like Water Hyacinths and Water Lettuce simply sit on your pond's surface. Roots drift below and act as filters. These easy-care plants provide surface cover, shade, and

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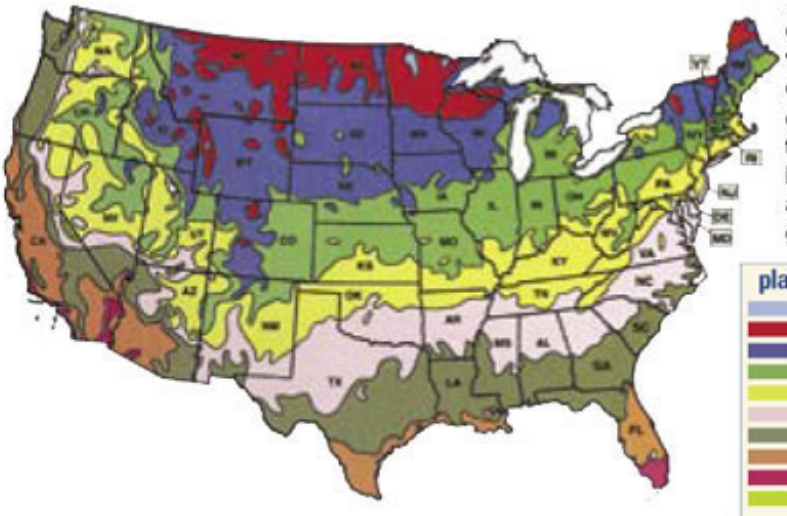
hiding places for fish. Many floating plants also produce flowers that can cleverly - and beautifully - disguise filtration or other elements. Floating plants use nutrients from the water, competing with algae and improving water clarity. Rapid growth and the ability to remove excess nutrients from water make floating plants extremely important in keeping a healthy water garden.

Plants, whether full or sparse, flowering or pure foliage - offer a simple, natural solution to boosting pond health and enhancing beauty. See our selection of pond plants at LiveAquaria.com.

quick tips for planting

- Use Planting Baskets for planting submerged and emergent plants like lilies. Locate near the surface when you first plant, or when plants sprout in the spring; move deeper as plants grow.
- Pack planting media around roots in basket planters or shallow rim areas of your pond, then top with pebbles. This gives your baskets and planted areas a natural, finished appearance, while preventing plant damage from koi and water currents.
- Add a variety of hardy plants for your region. They come back year after year and offer a wonderful return on your investment.
- Divide irises' thick, tough root systems every year or so. Without regular root separation, they flood planters with excess root growth. Separating roots is better for the plants and gives you more for your money.
- If your pond has no still areas, place floating plants in shallow beds with a rim or in a secured floating barrier. You can also anchor plants to a rim rock with fishing line. Otherwise, they will float into your skimmer.

your guide to planning and ordering plants



Use the map & chart to determine which plants will do best in your environment. All tropical plants can be grown as annuals in colder growing zones.

plant hardiness zones

Zone 2	-50	to	-40 °F
Zone 3	-40	to	-30 °F
Zone 4	-30	to	-20 °F
Zone 5	-20	to	-10 °F
Zone 6	-10	to	0 °F
Zone 7	0	to	10 °F
Zone 8	10	to	20 °F
Zone 9	20	to	30 °F
Zone 10	30	to	40 °F
Zone 11	above		40 °F

must-have supplies

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Long **gloves** for
reaching into cold water

Pruning Tool for
clipping spent plant leaves

Net for scooping
up clipped spent plants

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