



SMALL WATER GARDENS

A small water garden on the deck or patio is fun for the whole family. The only ingredients required are water, a container, and plants. Half whiskey barrels with plastic liners and old galvanized wash tubs make ideal containers for small water gardens. It is best to have water that is at least 12 inches deep.

Plants complete the water garden. It is best not to crowd a water garden, but a good selection of plant material is a must. There are several types of water plants. Submerged plants such as Anacharis help to keep the water clean. Floating plants such as Water Hyacinth shade the water surface. Water Lilies and Lily-like plants also stay close to the surface and have beautiful flowers. As with any container garden, you want to have low growing and upright elements. Arrowhead, Lizard Tail, or Dwarf Cattails are upright growers. Most of these plants need 4 to 6 hours of direct sun every day.

It is fun to add extras to a small water garden. If it is near a power source, add a spitter to circulate water and shoot it into the air. A small submergible light makes your water garden glow at night. In pots of 10 to 20 gallons, a goldfish or two can be quite enjoyable.

To keep your water garden safe for small children, or to protect fish from predators, cover the surface of the container with chicken wire or a slightly larger wire mesh. This allows plants to grow through the wire.

Care of a small water garden is quite simple. Make sure the container is sitting on a level surface. Add water occasionally to replace what is lost to evaporation. In the absence of moving water or fish, "mosquito dunks" will control mosquito larvae. Pellet fertilizer for the potted plants and liquid fertilizer for the floaters help keep the plant material healthy.

In the winter, do not allow the garden to freeze through entirely. Move the entire container or just the plants in buckets to an unheated garage or crawl space. Some tropical plants can be over-wintered in the house. For container gardens, it is best to over-winter goldfish in a larger pond outdoors or in a fish tank indoors. If a heater/de-icer is used, fish may survive the winter in the container. Koi are not recommended for small ponds.

Suggested aquatic plants for small ponds:

Water Hyacinth

Water Lettuce

Parrot's Feather

Yellow and Water Snowflake

Lizard's Tail

Mini Cattail

Arrowhead

Bulrush (Zebra and White)

Hardy Thalia

Umbrella Palm

Iris

Water Lilies, especially 'Helvola', Perry's Baby Red',

and 'Joanne Pring'

Water Clover



Note: most aquatic plants could be used since spread on most is controlled by pot size. Top-heavy plants such as Taro, Egyptian Papyrus, and Cattail may blow over and aren't generally recommended for small ponds.