

Lotus Planting & Care

The lotus is a beautiful water plant with round bluish green leaves held well above the water. They vary in size from the miniature Chinese noodle bowl lotus, which has flowers the size of a watch face, to huge standard size plants which can stand 6-7 feet above the water surface. The flowers open mid-morning and close mid-afternoon. Each flower lasts three days before the petals fall away revealing a distinctive seed pod. The pods continue to grow another 6 weeks until double in size. Flower colors are combinations of white, pink, red and yellow. Newly planted lotus will not always flower the first year. The chances of flowering are better if the early summer season is very warm and sunny. Lotus grow in zones 4-10. Most hybrids are developed from species native to East India.

LOTUS CULTURE

Keep at least 2-3" of water in your pot at all times. Lotus make excellent specimens for large patio waterbowls. If you wish to display your lotus in a pond, you must wait until the pond water has reached 70 degrees. If you put your lotus into cold water, it may return to a dormant state and not have enough stored energy to regrow.

AIR TEMPERATURE: Choose a wind free site. Lotus begin to grow when the air temperature is in the 70's. Once the temperature is 80 degrees for a period of four weeks the plant will begin to bloom.

WATER TEMPERATURE: The first spring leaves to appear will float on the water surface. Active growth begins when water temperature reaches 70 degrees. At that time the lotus will begin to send up leaves which will stand above the water surface. To display your lotus in a pond, place the pot only 2-3" below the surface so the plant can benefit from the warmer surface water. In the winter you can store you lotus in an unheated garage, a greenhouse or drop it to the deepest part of your pond (the tuber cannot be allowed to freeze). After the last frost the next spring, the lotus should be lifted from the pond or moved from the garage and placed in a sunny, warm & protected location to begin its seasonal growth. When the plant has developed its aerial leaves & the pond again reaches 70 degrees, you can return the lotus to the pond.

SUN EXPOSURE: Lotus should be grown in full sun only.

PRUNING: Remove yellowed foliage as needed but do not cut the stems off below the water line.

NUTRIENTS: When new growth begins each season, you should add aquatic fertilizer pellets to the planting pot. Do not place pellets directly against the tuber. Wait until your lotus has developed about 6 new leaves before the first feeding.

Because lotus are heavy feeders, you should fertilize again each month. Do not fertilize after Mid-July or the plant will not begin its seasonal dormancy on schedule. We do not recommend using granular aquatic fertilizer.

CONTAINERS: We pot our standard and dwarf lotus in approx. 16" wide containers for the first year. The dwarf forms can remain in this size pot. The standard size lotus should be repotted into larger containers after the first year. Be sure the container is deep enough to hold 2-3" of water.

REPOTTING: Because tubers resent disturbance, lotus can only be repotted early in spring just as growth begins. In the Portland area that will be late April or early May. When you see the first green shoots, you can lift the tuber from the original pot. The tuber will look like a long extension with banana like growths separated by rooting nodes on each end. The new growth shoots will come from this node area. If you want to divide your lotus, make sure that each division has at least four of the large banana like sections. Place a 2" layer of good garden soil on the bottom of your pot. Do not use packaged potting mixes as they are too light and will float. Place the lotus tuber horizontally across the pot and cover with no more than 1 1/2 inches of additional soil. Be sure that the growing tip is not covered or the lotus will rot. Add fertilizer tablets to the pot. When lowering the pot into your pond, tip the pot to allow the water to slowly enter one side. This prevents the tuber from being washed out of the pot.

WINTER PROTECTION: After the leaves die back in the fall you will need to winterize your lotus. If you are growing it in a pond, place your lotus in the deep part of the pond so that the top of the tuber is well below any ice that may form. If you are growing your lotus as a patio plant or your pond isn't deep enough for winter storage, bring the planting pot into a garage, basement or unheated greenhouse where the temperature will not drop below freezing. Keep enough water in the container to cover the tuber. Once all risk of frost has passed and the weather has warmed it is safe to return your lotus to a protected, sunny outdoor location. Again, if you wish to display your lotus in a pond, wait until your pond water has reached 70 degrees. If you find it too difficult to provide the required growing conditions in your pond environment, we suggest growing your lotus in a patio waterbowl which can be placed in a warm, sunny, protected location or in an atrium or greenhouse. In the winter you can then move the pot to an area which will not freeze, there the lotus can rest in a dormant state until spring.