

## **Water Lilies**

These are the 'jewel' of the water plant world. They are easy to grow and produce large brightly colored blooms most of the summer. The only downside is they are dormant in winter, no leaves or blooms, but well worth having with their spectacular blooms during warm weather.

They are very easy to grow, and take relatively little care. They prefer a heavy bog type of soil (a heavy clay soil works fine). It is usually best if there is not too much organic material in the soil mix, such as "Planter Mix". Plastic containers are usually ideal. For larger plants, two gallon or larger is best. Very large plants are often planted in specially made wooden boxes that are not too deep. Most containers are about 10"-12" deep, and 10" to 20" in diameter (or square).

Fill the container about one half full of soil and place the lily in the container. "Hardy Lilies" tend to grow in one direction so they should be planted to the side (see illustration). The plant is usually placed at about a 45-degree angle. Tropicals are planted in the center of the container. Add more soil and firm it around the plant to keep it in place. Keep the growing 'crown' above the soil. Fertilizer tablets are the easiest way to fertilize water lilies, and a couple of tablets at planting time will get them off to a good start. Cover the soil with about one half inch of gravel or clean coarse sand to keep the soil from floating out and discoloring the water.

Water thoroughly before placing the plant in the water. This will greatly reduce the air in the soil and only a very few air bubbles should come out when you place the plant in the water as too many bubbles can cloud the water.

Most of the lilies we sell are in one to two gallon containers for space reasons. They can be left in these containers; however, if you put them in larger shallow containers, they will grow faster and get larger. Hardy lilies should usually be replanted and divided about every two to three years. We would suggest you use new soil when this is done and discard the old soil. They can be divided providing you have large enough rhizomes. Don't divide them too small; 3" to 6" pieces with a growth eye is the norm. They must have a growth eye or they will not grow.

Tropical lilies form a kind of 'bulb' which sends off the leaves and blooms. Tropicals also tend to bloom above the water and there are some spectacular Blue varieties not available in the Hardy Lilies. They prefer warm water and go dormant if the water temperature goes below 55 degrees. Both Hardy and Tropicals should be fed with the tablets during the growing season. Wash aphids off with a stream of water.