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*How
Does
Your
Garden
Grow?*

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Create an Oasis in Your Backyard by Planting Your Pond

By Shannon Goins



Rafani Photography

Shannon Goins is a co-owner of NorthSide Aquatics, located on Counts Massie Rd. in Maumelle. She specializes in filtration and water quality management. Shannon welcomes everyone to stop in and see the new greenhouse water garden area at NorthSide Aquatics and join them on Facebook for the latest store updates.

Backyard ponds are a great way to provide refuge from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Above and beyond simple relaxation, ponds can stimulate us and add a great deal of interest to our backyard. Many people who build their own ponds stop developing them once they have a liner, water, rocks, and a few fish. By going one step further and planting their ponds, pond owners can create a dramatic effect in their existing waterscape. Pond plants instantly transform an ordinary sterile-looking "lifeless" pond into an ecosystem full of wildlife.

While planting a pond is not a difficult task, by following some general guidelines you can get the most out of your effort. The easiest place to begin is by knowing the types of plants that are available and figuring out how to work them into your existing waterscape. There are four major categories of pond plants: oxygenators, floaters, deep water plants, and marginal/bog plants. Each plant category has a specific purpose in the pond ecosystem.

CATEGORIES OF PLANTS

Oxygenators are submergent species, meaning that the main body of the plant is completely underwater at all times. Oxygenators are so named because they photosynthesize underwater and release oxygen that is necessary for fish. Common examples of oxygenators include anacharis, hornwort, cabomba, vallisneria and red ludwigia. These plants also serve as a great hiding place for small fry, so they are a great thing to have if you are trying to breed your fish.

Oxygenators can grow rapidly and may need to be reduced in quantity on occasion by pulling them out with a net. Vigorous growth means that your pond is full of nutrients that would otherwise feed algae. Be careful not to remove all of your oxygenators at once, since the fish are depending on them for oxygen and because its presence helps to keep algae in check.

If you are trying to use submerged plants as a long-term solution to murky water, be sure to use a clarifier first to settle out the water. If the water is so murky that light cannot

easily pass through, the plants are not likely to survive. Likewise, do not plant submerged plants directly under floating plants because they will be too shaded.

Floaters are a type of pond plant whose roots are free floating and do not need to be planted in any type of media. Common examples of floaters include water lettuce, frog bit, and duckweed. In the past one very popular floater was water hyacinth, but it has been outlawed in the State of Arkansas because it is clogging up waterways.

Floaters provide shade and help with nutrient uptake to keep algae from becoming a problem. Floaters usually reproduce prolifically and may need to be removed periodically with a net, but this is generally a very simple task since they are not rooted to anything.

Deep Water Plants is the third major category of pond plants, and is comprised of the many different varieties of water lily. Since they grow best in full sun, lilies are a great way to keep a full sun pond cool during hot Arkansas summers. Their multiple large flat leaves also provide cover for fish from predators.

Water lilies grow rapidly and can be invasive, so plant them in cloth baskets or tubs with no holes in them to reduce their ability to spread. When introducing lilies into your pond, make sure the existing leaves are not submerged. You may do this by starting the

pot out on a planting ledge or by using a stack of bricks to keep it near the surface. (You may wish to put some scrap pieces of pond liner under the bricks to keep them from causing a puncture. Ask for scraps at your local pond store.) After the lily has acclimated to its new environment and has grown, move it to deeper water. Water lilies are happiest when they are in water that is 15"-30" deep. Many lilies do not like areas of moderate to high water movement, so they should be located in a calm area.

Marginals and Bog Plants are emergent, ornamental plants that like to be planted along the edge of the pond in shallow areas, usually around 3"-6" in depth, with very slow moving water. Some of them can be planted in the mud. It is very important that these plants are never allowed to dry out. The marginals category of pond plants contains the largest selection, including many flowering plants and

grasses. Marginal plants that are commonly found for sale include cattails, zebra rush, cannas, creeping jenny, and pickerel rush.

Marginal plants are one of the most important types of plants for ponds that wish to attract wildlife because they often provide shelter for small animals. When planting marginals and bog plants, remember that for the best effect plant tall, thin plants such as grasses and irises towards the back and place shorter, broader leafed plants, like marsh marigold, towards the front.

PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE

The types of plants that you choose for your pond will affect the wildlife that you will attract. If you are trying to attract dragonflies and damselflies, use plants such as tall grasses and irises for the adult dragonflies to perch on and onto which they can lay their eggs. Submerged plants provide a place for larvae to develop. Dragonflies and damselflies are a wonderful addition to any yard, because they provide natural pest control by eating mosquitoes, flies, and ants.

If you want to attract frogs, be sure that your vegetation reaches out of the pond so that they can transport themselves in and out of it. You can also create a gentle slope by placing rocks and pea gravel along the edge so that the frogs can climb in and out easily. Songbirds are also attracted to a gently sloped area of 1"-3" deep. Remember that if you are trying to grow out tadpoles, they need something to eat, so a little algae is a good thing to have. Frogs are also beneficial to the pond because, like small fish fry, they eat spiders, beetles, bugs, moths, slugs, and snails.

PLANTING TIPS & TRICKS

There are a few basic tips and tricks to planting pond plants that can simplify upkeep and reduce the need for frequent maintenance.

Plant Generously, but Don't Over Plant! As a general rule, you should try to shade at least two thirds of the pond with floaters and deep water plants. This helps to keep the pond cool and controls algae by reducing the amount of light that reaches the pond. If floaters or deep water plants completely cover the water's surface, the oxygenating plants below will not have enough light to photosynthesize and produce oxygen for the fish.

Be sure to choose plants that grow to the size of the space you wish to fill. Read the labels or ask the staff at your local pond specialty store how big a plant will grow. It is tempting to place many marginal and bog



plants close together to quickly achieve a "grown out" look, but you will soon find that it is time to adjust your design because the plants have overgrown one another.

Additionally, keep in mind when planting oxygenators that plants produce carbon dioxide at night. If a pond is severely over planted or overgrown, it is prone to very low oxygen levels in the morning as the pond heats up from the sunlight. If your fish are gasping at the surface in the morning, this is due to a low oxygen levels.

Consider reducing the number of oxygenating plants or add a simple water fountain in the middle of the pond to create movement on the surface of the water. This helps to increase the oxygen level for the fish.

Dispose Your Unwanted Plants Carefully. When thinning out your pond plants, be sure to dispose of unwanted plants by first placing them in a sealed plastic bag prior to putting them into your household trash. Never release plants or fish from your pond into a nearby waterway. The damage that non-native species can cause the environment is severe and the extraordinary cost to

clean it up gets passed onto taxpayers.

Use Containers for Your Plants. Since many pond plants like to spread out, by utilizing plastic planting baskets, cloth planting bags, or floating planting rings to contain them, you can minimize the time required to perform routine cleaning. Simply lift out the baskets, place them in a damp area, and replace them in the pond when cleaning is complete. Using containers for plants also protects them from

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Peek-A-Boo

A Children's Consignment Event
At Tu Tus & Tennis Shoes Dance Studio
301 Commerce - Maumelle



August 27 - 29, 2009

Thursday 27th: 8am - 7pm
Friday 28th: 8am - 6pm
Saturday 29th: 8am - 2pm
(25% off on Saturday)

Currently accepting consignors.
Convenient consignor options are available with computerized inventory or hand-written tags.

For more information email us at peekabooconsignmentsale@yahoo.com or visit our website: www.peek-a-boo-consignment.com

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fish that might like to nibble on them. Be sure to use deep containers to anchor tall plants such as grasses and irises that are likely to be top heavy and could be blown over by the wind.

Use the Correct Fertilizer and Media. Always use fertilizer and planting media designed for ponds, as some soils can contain ammonia additives

and other very rich fertilizer which can fertilize too quickly and lead to algae growth. Fertilizer sticks for pond plants have a slow release mechanism that helps to fertilize just the right amount for a pond. Additionally, planting media for pond plants is usually much heavier than standard potting media, which will often float right out of the pot when placed in water. All of these planting items should be readily available at your local pond retailer.

A Note about Pond Salt. Pond salt is commonly added to ponds to keep fish healthy. Care should be taken when using salt in a planted pond, as too much salt will kill most plants. The rate of application is one half that of what you would use in a fish only pond. In a planted pond use 1.25 pounds of pond salt for every 100 gallons of water. Remember to only add the full amount of salt once after filling the pond. Do not add more when you top off the water for evaporation as the salt does not evaporate. Replace salt only if you remove water from your pond, and then add only the amount that you need for the water you are adding back.

Location is Everything. Planting ledges in a pond provide varying water depths which can help maximize the variety of plants you can grow successfully. These ledges may be built into existing ponds by using rocks as retaining walls and backfilling with pea gravel.

Some plants such as lilies do not like splash from waterfalls or aerators which are very common attractive ways to add interest to your pond. If you have either of these features, locate lilies in areas where splash and water movement are limited. Cattails and pickerel rush are far more tolerant of splash, so they would make a better choice for a location near a waterfall.

A pond ecosystem, abundant with wildlife, offers a welcome distraction at the end of a long day. It serves as an impromptu classroom where children readily seek out knowledge about ecology and life science, and it provides an area for family and friends to gather, relax, and be entertained by the many antics of the critters who call your pond home. ♣

Summer 2009 Movie Guide... Continued from Page 12

Peter Sarsgaard (Jarhead and Flightplan), Orphan is rated R, mostly for violent content. The Final Destination continues the story of the successful series based on the 2000 original, Final Destination. However this installment, where characters once again attempt to cheat death, is offered in 3-D, making death seem that much closer. The Final Destination is not yet rated, but will likely have some violent or scary material inappropriate for all ages.

For one last dose of action before the summer is through, audiences can see G.I. Joe: The Rise of the Cobra, which will release on August 7th. A live action film based on the action figure line, G.I. Joe: The Rise of the Cobra will chronicle the lives of the characters from the toy line and the rise of the franchise's Cobra organization. This film is currently not yet rated, but will likely include dramatic action sequences not appropriate for all ages.

No matter what your tastes, there is a film out there for everyone this summer! So take a break from the heat and step into the cool theater this summer for the adventure of the season! ♣