How to look after Pond Lilies?

Pond · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/how-to-look-after-pond-lilies/

Lilies are an attractive addition to any pond. They produce a beautiful flower (some of them are even scented, look for Odorata in the name!) and their pads offer great shade for your fish and wildlife, offering somewhere to hide from predators. The shading a lily provides can also help with the prevention of algae!

General requirements

As a general rule they prefer warm, still water in full sun, however they are generally quite tolerant of slightly varying conditions (unless you have a pond in full shade or your pond is more of a jacuzzi than a tranquil oasis!). If your pond is particularly shaded there are some new varieties such as "Shady Lady" which are better suited to shaded ponds.

It is vital that you take note of the maximum depth the lily will go down to, most lilies will tolerate 1 metre water depth, very few will go down to 1.2m and most are happy between 60cm and 90cm (2-3ft water depth). There is no minimum planting depth as long as the pads have the space to grow, our suppliers actually growth them in relatively shallow water to increase the growth rate!

Major pests

There are a number of water born pests that will eat the lily pads and these tend to leave characteristic "hole punches" in the leaves. It's very difficult to eradicate them but the best solution is often to use natural predation. Fish such as Golden Orfe and Rudd will happily demolish these pests for you and make an attractive addition to your pond.

The most common problem with Lilies is a lack of nutrients, with leaves turning yellow and their growth rate being extremely slow. Using a slow release fertilizer (often in the form of a ball, tablet or stick) that can be buried in the pot is best as this makes sure the lily has everything it needs to grow

properly.

Of course, we also have Koi and other carp. They love to ferret around in the dirt! Their whole physiology is aimed at mooching around in the rubbish at the bottom of a pond or lake to find tasty little worms and other morsels. Unfortunately, this means they will more than happily dig up a lily, throwing all of the soil onto the bottom of your pond. They are also quite partial to lily buds, so it may be that your prized lily never bears flowers as they are being munched on their way to the surface!

Koitastrophy

If you are desperate for a lily and do have koi, we would strongly recommend either wrapping your lily basket in hessian, or topping it off with heavy cobbles so the koi just can't get at all that tasty mud. Unfortunately, there are still no guarantees that your lily will produce a flower, unless the leaves are densely packed around the emerging bud, creating a physical barrier against the not so coy Koi.

Attack of the evil Algae

There is no form of algae that is in any way beneficial to a lily. Green water blocks out the light and stops them from growing, blanket weed tangles them up which causes problems as they are then trying to grow with thousands of tiny bungee cords holding them back. There are products such as EcoTreat Clarity which will both benefit the lily and get rid of algae. To find out more please read our article on getting rid of Blanket weed.

How to introduce a lily

The earlier in the year you are able to introduce a lily the better. In the colder months, they are still concentrating on building root structure as opposed to putting all their energy into leaves and buds. So, getting them established early will help to encourage more visible growth later on. That isn't to say you can't introduce them in the height of summer though, their root structure will have continued to develop in the grower's ponds.

What is important is that you provide them with everything they need. Slow release fertilizer such as Velda's Super Growth Balls, is very important. Introducing it will give the lily all the base elements it needs for growth, without adding anything harmful or polluting to the pond. The lily will usually come ready to go in a pot full of muddy soil (or soily mud depending on your point of view!) and we would always recommend topping this off with a layer of coarse gravel to help keep the soily muddy mud

soil in one place.

When introducing the lily, it is best to introduce it so the lily pads are around 6” (15cm) beneath the water’s surface. They can tolerate being dropped down to their final location, but then the lily pads have a long way to grow before they can get to the sun. When placed in the shallows, the lily has the best chance of quick growth. It’s also more likely that the water will be a little warmer at the surface which again encourages growth.

When the lily pads get to the surface you can drop it down again, so step by step you are heading towards the bottom, all the time getting the maximum growth out of your new plant. Having clear water also helps the growth rate, so a lily will grow extremely slowly if your pond is full of green water.

ALWAYS read the label that comes with your lily, and don’t exceed the maximum planting depth. It has happened before where poor little lilies have been dropped down to the depths never to be seen again...

Size IS important!

It is important to get the right size of lily for your pond as there are some monsters that will take over a small pond leaving you with little or no open water. Our lilies can be categorised by size firstly and then by the colour of their flower:

- Pygmae lilies are best suited for small barrels or tiny ponds. They usually have a maximum spread of 30cm (12 inches) and their pads are about the size of a fifty pence piece.
- Dwarf lilies (such as Aurora) have a maximum spread of 60cm. We would probably recommend that the width of your pond is double that of the lilies maximum spread, unless you want it to fill a particular area.
- Small/medium lilies probably have the biggest range and their spread varies between 70cm such as Sioux and 90cm such as Rose Arey. All of the lilies in this group come in 4 litre pots so there is lots of room for growth, but we do recommend repotting them after 12 months.
- Large Lilies like Albatross can reach a spread of 150cm, so certainly not for the smaller pond. The lilies in this group have the largest pads and generally have a spread of 90cm up to 1.5 metres. They will grow quickly and provide a lot of cover for your pond, but can overwhelm smaller ponds...beware of the triffids!

So there you go, there’s quite a lot that goes into looking after Pond Lilies but they’re beautiful plants that can transform any garden pond. If you’d like more information or if you have questions on anything covered in this article just get in touch!