

# Growing Hardy Lotus

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.

**PLACEMENT:** Keep at least 2-3" of water in your pot at all times. Lotus make excellent specimens for large patio water bowls. 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 chilly 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. 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, store the 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.***

**FERTILIZING:** Wait until your lotus has developed about 6 new leaves before the first feeding. We recommend Jobe's Organic Fertilizer Spikes 4-4-4. Do not place spikes directly against the tuber. Push the spike into the soil approximately 1" away from the tuber and completely cover the inserted spike with soil. Fertilize monthly until late summer when the plant is no longer putting up new growth.

**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. Plant lotus in round or oval containers.

**REPOTTING:** Because tubers resent disturbance, lotus can only be repotted early in spring just as growth begins. 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. Do not add fertilizer at this time. 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.

*[Parts of this article have been modified from Hughes Water Gardens]*

**Walker Avenue Nursery** is an independent, family-owned nursery located on 6.5 acres in Sonoma County. The land has been dedicated as part of a water reclamation project that recycles water from the City of Santa Rosa. Our plants are grown entirely on reclaimed water and free of synthetic pesticides and fertilizer.