

Spring TLC for your Water Plants

Spring is here. You are already preparing your pond for warmer weather by starting up your pumps and filters, cleaning out debris that accumulated over the winter, and slowly beginning to feed a low protein diet to those awakening fish.

It will only be a little while longer and you will begin to see your hardy water plants starting to poke their heads above the soil. That is the time when you should be grooming the plants by removing any remaining decaying foliage from the prior season. Only cut back plants that put out leaves and flowers on new growth. Plants that have hollowed leaves and stems should be pruned above the water line so that the cavity does not fill with water and rot the root stock.

At this time, it is also good to raise the plants from their winter home on the bottom of the pond to one of the higher shelf areas. This will give them a greater amount of sunlight as well as warming the soil to give the plants a jump start.

Begin fertilizing as soon as you see new growth. Pond fertilizer tablets are easy to use and a necessity to produce healthy strong plants. This is especially true of flowering plants. The rule of thumb is to insert one tablet in each pot each month. Keep in mind that the soil water plants are typically planted in is a dense clay type soil or possibly just stone. In either case, the plants will need more nutrients than the soil medium provides.

After careful examination, you may find plants that need to be divided and transplanted. When you see a planting container bulging and in strange shapes, split down the side, or more roots extending out of the pot than in, it is time to give it a little help.

This is especially true with water lilies. Once you see new growth from the dormant tuber, gently remove the tuber from the soil and with a sharp knife, cut the tuber so that at least one leaf is evident on each section. Re-plant with aquatic planting soil, add 2 to 3 fertilizer tablets, and top off with a 1 inch layer of pea pebbles. The pea pebbles will prevent the fish from up-rooting the plant and scattering the soil mix all over the pond.

If you were overwintering tropical plants indoors, make sure we are past the last frost of the season before placing them out in the pond. Also, hardening tropical plants by placing them outside on sunny warm days and bringing them in at night will provide a healthier transition to their summer home and prevent setting them back.

Start looking for new plants at Pickering Valley Feed beginning mid-April. We will be carrying a large selection of hardy, native, and tropical water plants including floaters, oxygenators, marginal/bog plants, and water lilies. Watch the selection grow as the season begins to warm. We sell locally grown, mature well-established plants ready to be placed in your pond. Come in and talk with our water garden experts and find out which plants will work best in your pond!