

Tips for Night-blooming Aquatic Plant Care

April 22, 2010

These professional tips about caring for night-blooming aquatic plants can benefit pond and water garden retailers and customers alike.

Give night-blooming waterlilies full sun. People often think they do not need sun because they bloom at night, but night-blooming waterlilies need the sunlight to produce those blooms. The night-blooming Antares produces plenty of fuchsia flowers and bronze foliage. (Courtesy of Longwood Gardens)

For easy care, put aquatic plants in the pond still in the pot. The pot can contain the appropriate growing medium -- often a clay-and-gravel substrate -- as well as nutrients. The pot also provides protection from pond fish.

Divide and conquer. Pruning the night-blooming aquatic plants helps to keep them controllable, said Steve McShane with McShane's Nursery & Landscape.

Give the night-blooming aquatic plants space. Waterlilies perform best if the leaves can lay flat on the water so that the plants do not touch one another, said Oscar Warmerdam with Moerings USA. "They'll grow faster and produce more flowers."

Feed night-blooming aquatic plants adequately. These showy plants need plenty of energy to produce those flowers, so fertilizing is a must. This is especially true if the night-blooming aquatic plants are kept in small pots to limit size.

In cold climates, treat night-blooming waterlilies like annuals. It's possible to overwinter these night-blooming aquatic plants, but busy customers might find it inconvenient.

In warm areas, leave night-blooming aquatic plants outdoors year-round. Tropical waterlilies probably will survive the winter outdoors in USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 8 and higher, said Mike Swize with Nelson Water Gardens. McShane said winter represents a good time to insert a fertilizer tablet so that "come spring, that lily's ready to party."

Overwintering night-blooming aquatic plants is possible in colder zones. Adventurous northern gardeners can try forcing the night-blooming aquatic plants into dormancy by withholding fertilizer and letting the plants dry out a bit late in the season. The night-blooming aquatic plants will form tubers that can be stored indoors in damp sand or distilled water at 50 to 60 degrees. An alternate method: Tiny leaves that grow around the night-blooming aquatic plant have their own roots. They can be potted up and placed under lights in an aquarium.