



# Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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## Exotic Tropical Aquatics

**Simon Seah**, *Johnson's East Store Manager*

With the onset of warm weather, water gardens thrive with life in the form of plants and fish. Consider changing the effect of your water garden with the use of tropical aquatics. Tropical marginals and water lilies can give your pond an exotic aura.

Tropical marginals offer an array of texture, shape, flower-type and fragrance. Try diversifying the look of your pond by experimenting with the different traits of these plants. Some of the most popular options in tropical marginals are aquatic cannas, papyrus, miniature papyrus, umbrella palms, the sensitive plant, and taro.

Aquatic cannas are tolerant of numerous inches of water above their crown level. Their tall nature and broad leaves give your water garden an exotic tropical look. The vast array of flower colors in cannas are also an excellent reason for their inclusion in a pond.

The papyrus and umbrella palms are unique for their foliage ... vertical stems with "mop heads" add a vertical accent and unique visual interest to the pond. Giant papyrus grows to over 6' while miniature papyrus reaches 2'. Umbrella palm and mini-umbrella palms are unique features for ponds of all sizes. Umbrella palm averages around 4'-6' whereas mini-umbrella palm grows to 3'.

The sensitive plant and taro are other water garden plants with unique foliage. The sensitive plant looks like a fern and grows much like a ground cover in your water garden. The most unique feature of this plant is that the leaves close upon contact ... ergo ... the sensitive plant.

Taro is a relative of elephant's ear commonly grown in gardens. Taro, however, comes in various stem colors with the typical veined elephant's ear leaves.

Tropical water lilies are the ideal addition to ponds of any size. There is sure to be a variety to suit your needs. Tropical water lilies flower well above the water level sometimes standing 1.5' above the surface. They come in a wider range of colors from blues, purples, reds, pinks, whites, yellows, even GREEN flowers ... in numerous shades ... some with almost a neon effect! Tropical water lilies come in both day and night bloomers. Night bloomers open in early evening and remain open until late morning the following day. The inclusion of tropical water lilies into your pond also brings great fragrance to your water garden. Most tropical water lilies are notorious for being quite fragrant, but hardy lilies are rarely fragrant.

Lotus is another dramatic plant to include in your water garden. They range in color from yellows, whites, reds, and pinks. Lotus flowers are among the largest of all aquatic plants, easily reaching dinner plate size!!!! The foliage, flowers and seed pod stand 1.5' to 6' above water's surface.

Many of these aquatics can be used for flower arrangements, both cut and dried, as an alternative to the common plants already used in floral arrangements.

Part of the fun in water gardening is seeing the changes from season to season and to observe the differences in effect of a new plant in the pond. But if you already have sufficient plant life, perhaps it's time to change or add to your water feature with a different fountain head, waterfall, or stream. Or better yet, stop in to any of Johnson's Garden Centers' three locations for help with your water feature!