



Growing Lotus from Seed

By Jamie Daily

The lotus plant has intrigued and fascinated people for centuries. It was seen as a sacred plant in Ancient Egypt. Almost all of their gods are depicted with a lotus at some point in their history. The Buddhism and Hinduism religions also consider the lotus a sacred flower. The lotus is seen as a symbol of rebirth as it rises from the murky water and presents a pure untouched blossom, much like the butterfly is considered a symbol of rebirth in Christianity.

The Egyptians noticed that the lotus closed at night and sank into the water, therefore they associated the flower with rebirth and the sun. However, the lotus actually emerges slowly over a three-day period and then blooms from morning until late afternoon. Lotus in ancient Egypt were of two types, white and blue. Technically the blue is not a true lotus but rather a water lily, but the blue is the type seen more often in hieroglyphics.

In the Buddhist religion, the lotus is a symbol of purity and spiritual faithfulness. It is a symbol of purity as it emerges unscathed from the murky water. The breaking of the surface of the water each morning is suggestive of desire and association with spiritual enlightenment.

The different colors also have a specific symbolism in Buddhism. Blue is associated with spiritual wisdom, intelligence and knowledge. White represents a state of mental purity and spiritual perfection. Purple is known to be mystical and representative of the eightfold path, one of the principal Buddhist teachings. Pink is considered the supreme lotus flower as it is the lotus of Buddha. Red represents love and purity.

For the Hindus the lotus is associated with beauty, fertility, prosperity, spirituality and eternity. The most common lotus in the Hindu religion is white.

After researching the lotus, I decided I would like to have at least one. After all, it is a water plant and so does not require excessive watering. However, when I researched buying a lotus plant, I had major sticker shock. Prices started at eighty to ninety dollars. Since I did not want to pay those prices and I do grow plants from seeds, I started looking for seeds for sale. Fortunately, there are many online stores that sell seeds, and eBay and Etsy also feature lotus seed sellers. I ordered a package of yellow lotus seeds. I chose this plant because it is the only lotus native to the United States and it grows in Texas. I thought this would give me the best chance for success.

Lotus seeds should be planted in late spring or early summer in order to be sure that the plant can survive the winter. (Not so much of a problem in Texas because the container of water does not usually freeze all the way to the bottom of the water and thus the roots will survive).



My seeds arrived in about a week or ten days and included instructions. Lotus seeds have a very impervious coating, and can be viable for over one hundred years so the first step was to scarify them.

I found the easiest way to do this was to hold the seed with a small pair of pliers and rub it against a steel file until the cream-colored coat emerged. Do not go too deep in removing the hard coat as you might prevent sprouting. After scarifying the seeds, place them in warm to hot water overnight. I found the best container was a 2 liter soda bottle with the top removed. The sprouts can get very long and will need the room. Check the seeds daily for signs of bacteria in the water. If the water turns cloudy, there is bacteria in it. I found it was easier to just change the water every day usually in the morning. The seeds should begin to sprout in a day or two. Once the seeds start sprouting, be very careful changing the water as you could separate the seed from the sprout. (I learned that the hard way by actually doing it so I feel you should be warned of this potential problem). Place the container where it will get light. When the sprouts reach six inches in length, it is time to plant them.

To plant the seeds, place six to eight inches of soil in the bottom of a container without drainage holes. Do not use potting soil, as it is too light. Clay works very well, as it is a heavy soil. Fill the pot with water and plant the seed in the bottom of the pot. I found I could plant two seeds in each pot without problems. Place the pot in a sunny spot, but if it is really hot, allow for some shade. Since the plant already has at least one leaf, it will produce additional leaves which will float on the surface of the water at first and then emerge above the water. The plant will not bloom until the second year, so if you purchase seeds in different colors in the same packet, you will not know the color of each pot of lotus until the second year, probably in the late spring. Fertilize it with one of the tablets for water plants when the leaves emerge from the water and then fertilize it about once a month.

Winter care in South Texas is relatively easy. If the water in the pot does not freeze, the roots or tubers will survive although the leaves will die. You can cover the plant to try to protect the leaves and if you live where the water would freeze to the bottom of the pot, it would be a good idea to cover it or move it inside a building, if possible. The following spring you can enjoy your lotus flowers.