

8 Common Myths about Water Gardening

Myth #1 *Small water features are less work.* As water features get larger they become easier to maintain. Yes, easier! Larger bodies of water are healthier in part due to a greater flow which aids in long-term stability. Achieving an ecological balance is the goal and with a larger capacity for plants, bacteria colonies, fish and such this balance improves each year for greater stability.

Myth #2 *You should never have algae in your pond.* Out of proportion that is. Green algae is beneficial plant life upon which fish eat and a balanced ecosystem is achieved. Too much of a good thing is more the case with algae. Algae and sunlight go hand-in-hand therefore providing some shade to your pond is important. This shade can be obtained by building your pond in the shadow of a tree or adding plants at the margins or having lilies are beautiful ways to shade your pond.

Myth #3 *Maintaining a water garden is a constant headache.* Work with Mother Nature and not against her. This goes back to the “balanced ecosystem”. Installing top-quality mechanical & biological filtration systems provide a strong foundation for the aquatic plants, fish, active bacteria and lots of rocks. These items will soon begin to harmonize with each other. Establishing this balance eliminates the need for chemicals and testing, also making sure your pond is not chemically dependent. Adding a scoop of bacteria is not considered adding chemicals as it is a necessity for the ecosystem. Here in Minnesota it is suggested that an annual spring clean out be done, similar to what you might do with a perennial garden.

Myth #4 *To keep fish, ponds need to be deep.* If 2 feet is deep then “yes”, but if 2 feet seems reasonable to you then “no”! Koi are hardy fish and can hibernate in 2 feet deep water, even through Minnesota winters! You can’t just leave them and forget them, they do need a “breathing hole” in the ice so they can receive oxygen. This can be created with a heater and/or circulating pump.

Myth #5 *Water features are breeding grounds for mosquitoes.* The ideal breeding ground for our “state bird” is still, standing water. A well-designed water garden has lots of water flow plus fish, frogs and other wildlife that eat mosquitoes!

Myth #6 *A water garden costs a fortune.* A water garden is certainly an investment, but no longer has to be a money pit. If you are a do-it-yourselfer you can save money just as long as you are willing and able to put in the time & sweat equity. Just remember there is a lot of value in having someone with the know-how building your pond. The average investment for a water garden is \$6,000–\$8,000. Running a high-efficiency pump all day, every day will add about \$30-\$40 onto a monthly electric bill. As with most home improvements, it can pay for itself in increased home equity!

Myth #7 *Predators will eat all you fish.* We cannot guarantee that predators will not find your water feature but we can give you tips for protecting it. We like to build shelter into our ponds through the placement of the rocks in the bottom. We create little pockets and tunnels for the fish to hide in and also get some shade. Motion-activated water sprayers will deter herons and muskrats prefer to hunt in larger bodies of water so usually aren't a problem. Raccoons can be a problem if they have access from the waters edge. They don't like to swim for their supper so building your water garden about 8 feet wide will deprive these varmints of this dry access to the safe, deep parts of your water garden.

Myth #8 *Any contractor or landscaper can build a water garden.* Building a pond and building it right are two different things. Even a good landscaper isn't necessarily knowledgeable in the concept, design or construction that makes a water garden thrive. Make sure that the installer is trained, certified and has experience. Don't hesitate to ask for references and take the time to visit some of their previous work.

The team at The Mustard Seed meets all of these criterias and would be happy to give you a list of our references. You can view some of our work on our website at www.TheMustardSeedInc.com. We would be honored to create a water gardening paradise for you and your family. Call us at 952-361-9954 or e-mail us at ToMustardSeedInc@aol.com

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