

MEETING REPORT - Water in small garden spaces.

Water in a garden is a desirable thing, and Linda Smith gave us some great ideas as to how to incorporate a water feature into a small space.

A small pond or container will attract wildlife, and sympathetic planting can provide an eye-catching display. Plants can be selected for flowers, foliage or structural elements. Circles work best in a confined area, but don't make the design too busy. Water lilies do not like being splashed, their leaves will wither, so keep them away from fountains or waterfalls. Too much splashing or spray means your pond will lose water very quickly and a pump could soon run dry. Linda showed us a striking white double lily with a golden centre, *Nymphaea Gonnere*. There are miniature water lilies, which can be grown in 12-15 inch depth. A lovely deep pink one is *N. Pygmaea Rubra*. A miniature Iris to complement this is the blue *Iris Laevigata* or the stunning deep purple *Iris Black Gamecock*. Miniature bulrushes, such as *Typha Minima*, have wonderfully sculptural seed heads. All water lilies need sun, but Linda showed us a dramatic *Anemopsis Californica*, with cream bracts round a dense central cone, with a lovely honey smell, and the advantage that the foliage can turn red in autumn or in cold spells. It is happy in sun or shade, and we were all very taken with this plant.

It is essential to follow exactly the grower's recommendations for water depth to ensure success. Linda showed us some of her superb free-standing fiberglass circular water containers, which have special grids inside to enable plants to be placed at the right depth. Planting into plastic baskets means that you can swop plants around depending on the season. Plants must always be planted in specialist aquatic compost, with oxygenating plants such as *Ceratophyllum Demersum*, which has unusual "fibre-optic" seed heads. Kaffir Lillies will stand on a gridded ledge at the margin and will flower from September to December. There is now a barley straw extract which can be added to the pond fortnightly to prevent the water going green, and you can also buy chlorine removing liquid, but it is best to use rainwater to fill your container. Linda advised not to overplant, you must be able to see the water. Floating citronella candles or mint close by will discourage any pesky mozzies! Linda gave us a huge amount of very useful information, and we suspect there may be a sudden surge in water features after this talk. *(I want one of her gorgeous red containers! Ed)*